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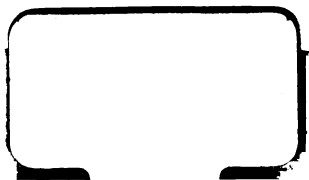
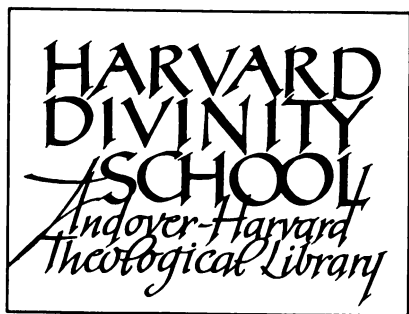
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GRAINS OF GOLD;

OR,

SELECT THOUGHTS

ON

SACRED THEMES.

Cyr

THIRD THOUSAND.

BOSTON:
AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,
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PREFACE.

The following selections have been taken, by permission, from two volumes of sermons, entitled **THE CHRISTIAN SPIRIT AND LIFE**, and **THE CHRISTIAN BODY AND FORM**, by Rev. Cyrus A. Bartol, junior pastor of the West Church, Boston.

Seldom have the discourses of a living divine been welcomed by a larger circle of instructed and gratified readers. They have found these works marked throughout by a deep insight into spiritual truth, a living and fresh earnestness, and a rare ability to spread over subjects, usually accounted dull, the bright colors of a rich and fertile imagination. The reverent and catholic spirit of their author is seen on every page, as is also his profound conviction of the necessity of religion for the light and peace of man's soul.

It is in the hope that the striking illustrations and choicely-expressed sentences, with which these sermons abound, may, through divine grace, unseal the fountains of a spiritual life in many hearts, that this little volume has been prepared. Taken up in the house, or by the way, in the spare moment of business, or the calm hour of retirement, it may whisper a thought which shall be like an angel-visit to the soul. As a present from parents and teachers to the young, or from friend to friend, it may add, to an endeared token of affection, the aroma of a gifted and devout mind. Those familiar with the sermons will find here, we doubt not, some of the passages which they had marked; while we shall expect that these Grains of Gold will lead many to the mine from which they have been gathered.

H. A. M.

Boston, May, 1854.

GRAINS OF GOLD.

PROOF OF CHRISTIANITY FURNISHED BY WHAT IT IS AND DOES. — A survey of the actual stature and bearing of our religion evinces its truth, as well as does this perpetual inquiry into its historic sources, and following down the whole line of its descent. Some deference is certainly due, not only to documentary facts, but to vital power. The volcano, no less than an obscure groping among the strata of the earth, or conflict of geologic doctrines, is demonstration of the central fire. What Christianity is and does, furnishes its evidence; not only the circumstances of its origin or conditions of its progress, from the first century to the third, or from the third to the nineteenth. Preposterous is the ground taken by some, — a ground on which all human

life would stand still, — that the Gospel is to be allowed no acceptance till we can settle every difficulty concerning it, and resolve all doubts. “How,” says our sceptic, “did it get over that early chasm of unrecorded or imperfectly accessible and strangely-storied years?” Verily, my friend, it did get over, and is here among us to teach and to bless, however inexplicable or miraculous, as in other cases of preservation, may have been the escape. To deny it recognition till you can fix every point of its genealogy is like refusing to listen to a man’s wisdom, or admire his goodness, till you have followed down, on the herald’s list or the family chart, every point of his pedigree. Grant that there are hard passages in our faith, lists of names that cannot be reconciled, knotty queries; possibly places in revelation, as there are chasms and gulfs in nature, we may try in vain to fathom, or to link together, or bridge over. But, meantime, shall we not inspect the great qualities of

the religion, examine its intrinsic beauty, observe its internal strength, taste and cultivate its precious fruits? Shall we not walk about Zion, consider her bulwarks, mark her palaces, behold her towers, and, having compared her glory with all beside of ancient rearing or modern growth, tell it to the generation following?

BIGOTRY NOT THE ONLY SIN OF WHICH A PROFFESSED BELIEVER MAY BE GUILTY.— In undertaking to determine the particular features of our religion, there is, no doubt, danger of falling into uncharitable restrictions. There is a complexion of liberality, there is a gesture of magnanimity, in wholly waiving such an attempt, and leaving every one unmolested to decide or avoid any point of doctrine or observance at his pleasure. It looks generous to interfere with nobody, and odious to reduce the latitude of any man's freedom. But, after so stout a maintenance as we have had of

human liberty, and so successful a protest in these latitudes against all tyranny over the mind, is it not, at last, seasonable to reflect that bigotry, though a great sin, is not the only sin against men, nor dogmatism the solitary injury to the temper of our religion? What is valuable may be lost by evaporation as well as by extinction; and it does not so much matter whether a narrow creed choke the life of Christianity, or a boundless generalization dissipate it. If a hot sectarian zeal is unjust to the honest dissenter, so is a blank indifference of faith and custom disrespectful to the word of God and unloving to human souls. It is better to be burnt by the believer's passionate ardor for his own opinions, than chilled by icy disregard of any tenets. It is better to take the kingdom of God by violence, than not even to resolve on peaceful entrance. It is better to lay hold on some part or corner of the Gospel, than to neglect altogether embracing it. That was high praise of a certain

class of disciples, that theirs was a religion in earnest; and the bitter complaint of illiberality may indicate a sensitiveness suggestive of suspicion whether we ourselves stand on a rock. We can bear a little rough search of the contents in the vessel of our belief, if we have a sincere and positive one. The threatening or fearful charge that over this sea of time we sail under wrong colors, or in no heavenly direction, implies a finer tribute of regard than does an utter carelessness about our standard, and whether we sail for the heavenly country at all. It is more promising for the maintenance of Christianity that it should be partially understood and rigidly urged, than that it should be the object of a cool civility — very large and respectful, bowing to its proofs, but not on fire with its affections, or fulfilling its rules.

“FREE RUN OUT OF A FROSTY CREED.”—
An overweening assurance of being right,

joined with unbrotherly feeling or selfish passion, begets, indeed, the vice of intolerance ; but intolerance itself, turned against those who have forsaken the work of a party zealotry, denies its own nature, and becomes with them not seldom the ugly mother of a beautiful child of charity. Those, driven off from some little pale and enclosure of communion, are, by a holy revenge, made kind-hearted and hospitable to all. Like the issue from certain frozen cordials of increased sweetness and strength, or the flow of the must of new wine from the crushing of the grapes, is the free run out of a frosty creed, or, from beneath the pressure of persecution, of their genuine friendship. The heart thanks them for their noble utterances, and their courageous corresponding actual procedure. Nay, with no sectarian joy or partisan ambition, the heart thanks God for raising them in the little ranks of some special order to be the honors of our common nature, and leaders of the host of humanity.

OFFICE OF THE ATTITUDE OF WORSHIP.—


We talk of self-satisfaction, but there is no such thing. No sinner, surely, was ever satisfied with himself in his poor pasture of husks ; never, certainly, was any saint. The more he accumulates merits, the less his comfort in contemplating them as his own. To his vision, purged through the very growth of his spirituality and progress into the light of higher conceptions and ideals of goodness, they lose their gaudy color ; they will not wear the robe of self-complacency ; in all their amount and grandeur they look but like splendid failures and masses of imperfection in his own eyes. He adopts the poet's cry,

“Forgive my sins ; forgive my virtues, too,—

Those smaller sins, half converts to the right.”

Wonderfully, by this spiritual attitude of worship, made wonted and secure by the forms and acts of worship, God holds his children, for sustenance, in his own bosom ; provides for their humility even in their

improvement ; whets the conscience to aggravated demands with every upward step ; makes it more tender to remaining evil with increasing worth ; hides remorse in our excellence as much as in our depravity ; goads it with stings of memory to the leap of self-abandonment into the peace of his arms ; and thus causes our self-depreciation to become not passive despair, like the wavering motion with which the exhausted bird circles heavily to the ground, but only like its lowly stoop, skimming down for a new impulse, with rested wings to soar up into heaven.



THE SIGNIFICANCE AND WORTH OF RITUAL OBSERVANCES. — “And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.” There is something remarkable in what the evangelist here mentions for the ground of his eulogy. The persons to whom he refers had not only, he tells

us, lived a good moral life, but had also discharged the established offices of their religion. They had kept its holy days, sought its consecrated places, offered its appointed sacrifices, lifted up its choral psalms, and bowed in its regular and lowly prayers. And was this a reason why they should be so praised, — for observing a seventh day, going into the doors of a synagogue, carrying up doves and lambs to an altar, and still walking in this daily circle, continued, with occasional variations, through the annual round? Was such punctiliousness to be esteemed meritorious, even in addition to such a thing as private purity? What did it signify, this stated course of external proceeding, done or not done? It signified their reverence for God. It was their hearts' language to their Maker. It was the way they told to their Author, and the Lord of their people and of the whole earth, their thankfulness, penitence and worship. Why should not this sincere expression be as much worth, and

as clear a basis of commendation, as any personal virtue? Why should a moral act of kindness or honesty be more accounted of than a ritual act of devotion, or a word of veracity or good temper on earth be more needful than an expression of truth and loyalty to Heaven?

INSUFFICIENCY OF THE NATURAL INSPIRATION OF THE HUMAN MIND. — The idea of the natural and sufficient inspiration of the human mind would render any special disclosure from Heaven needless ; would offer to mankind a vacation from all discipline, and, indeed, give to exhortations of every sort a supererogatory character. Any preaching of, or connected with, such an idea, may remind one of the familiar nursery-rhyme that commands “perfect men” that they “ever keep the precepts ten ;” an injunction which such persons would not seem to require. Even of these childish lines, what is all unqualified magnify-

ing of the soul's native insight and intrinsic purity but a rhetorical swell? That light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world, like other lights, burns in one or another more or less largely and clearly, with multitudes waxes pale and dim, and in not a few almost wholly goes out. The very question is how to relume, and feed, and spread, the celestial lustre. The keeping of the ten commandments is no easy thing, and has rarely had a place correspondent to their old engraving, in any age of the world ; to say nothing of those loftier tasks in deportment and spirit which Jesus Christ has assigned. Slowly to raise men up into obedience to law is the aim of every sort of training, civil or theological ; and a consummation to which all institutions, directions, prayers and appliances, are prerequisite. Christianity is but another mode and new path to its larger and perfect accomplishment.

SPIRITUAL GHOST-HUNTING AND VAGRANCY. — The running after ghosts, that so marks the present period, would seem a fit caricature of the disposition to hunt for truth less among the substantial facts of providence and experience than in the thin air of metaphysical reasoning. Not a few have come to despise, or see no utility in, and thus been inclined to shake off, or let go by default, to flout with forgetful irregularity, or slight with long postponement, the most venerable customs and traditions of our religion ; and some would even melt all its old peculiarities of form and doctrine, as but rusty cast-off fragments, in the foundery of their own minds, for re-statement after the pattern of some prevailing philosophy. From the hardness and dryness of a literal theology, or from the chafing of ecclesiastical oppression, a part of the community has been thrown off into the other extreme of free-thinking, endless speculation, and well-nigh savage

independence and solitary vagrancy of religious manners.

THE GOSPEL METHOD. — Christianity may be regarded in a two-fold way, as an end and a means. The Christian spirit and life is a certain absolute quality and finished result. But exactly in proportion to its preciousness and importance are we urged by the question, through what instrumentality this quality shall be instilled, this result attained. On the one side is the heavenly truth and immortal excellence ; on the other are we, in these earthen vessels, in the midst of the material world. How across the chasm the divine element shall be drawn or poured into us, or how, in our sickly state, the healing power shall be introduced into our frame and blood ; what are the channels to be cut, or what the hindrances to be removed ; what subtle obstacles may baffle and make vain the whole action of our religion, as an imper-


ceptible wedge keeps the huge ship from launching into the seas ; — in short, not so much the object as the method of the Gospel, is certainly a serious point of inquiry.

RELIGIOUS FORMS ARE A VEHICLE OF THE SPIRIT. — No ritual, of course, is to be sustained for its own sake, but only in behalf of that spiritual elevation which is the glory of our nature and only enchantment of the world ; and beside which all that time and space contain is of no account, but as its means. As an ethereal essence is guarded for use in a phial ; as the elemental forces of nature, from their diffusion through the universe, are made at special points to strike and flash on our senses, so is it with the divine power through the agency of the Christian services. A lifeless administration or deathly inattention may despoil them of their virtue ; but their fit and natural effect is to initiate the mind into a stronger sense of eternal realities

than could arise from any ethical teaching. Undoubtedly, such services as at present ordered will at length fall away from the soul in the vast spiritual progress of future stages of his being. Nevertheless are they suited to train successive human generations, and especially to lead on children to their first perceptions of invisible reality, though they would not suffice to conduct one advancing intellect, supposed to remain on earth through all the duration of the church.

WHAT IS A SPIRITUAL RELIGION? — It is said, We love a spiritual religion. Allow me, then, to ask, what is a spiritual religion but a religion that makes men spiritual? Are you, therefore, spiritual for your neglect of the Christian institutions? Does your experience or your observation find spiritual life flowing from such a source? Is it spirituality or worldliness that is most apt to indulge itself with a dispensation of

absence from the house, and disregard of the worship, of God? Does the beauty of holiness, or the stamp of some earthly aim, most commonly mark the mind that forsakes this grave and noble service growing out of our common nature and common heart? Is there not, in short, more of fancy and speculation, than of sentiment or principle, in the piety that scorns ordinances? and does not some poor votary of the shrine of prayer, who, confined to her solitary room by illness, Bible and hymn-book in hand, keeps pace with the procedure of the congregation's praise, soar far higher into the real heaven? To whom is the celestial paradise and kingdom of heaven most likely to be a figure of speech, and not a matter of fact, — to the faithful attendant with those that keep holy time, or to the willing absentee from their assembly?



THE HEAVENLY SHELTER. — Among the graces and virtues of the character, may be justly counted a love of holy times and places and things. So, indeed, nature herself, the heart's own instinct, decides. For who esteems a man the more for being destitute of this feeling, and owning no such association as made David's heart yearn for the stones of Zion, and her dust dear unto him ; nay, led our Saviour himself, on the Sabbath-day, as his custom was, into the synagogue, in the town where he had been brought up, to open the book of the law and read ? If the royal singer of Israel, and his greater descendant, could light the flame of their aspirations with that ancient fuel of letter and form and ordinance, he may be considered a mistaken, vain-glorious or imprudent man, who, from any hatred of old priestly corruptions, or offence at existing clerical pride, or supposition of a personal superiority, not needing foreign influence, loses or

throws away the advantage of such habitual suggestives of those invisible and eternal realities, of which we are not too often reminded, and which we do not powerfully enough feel press on the heart and control the life.

Will any one still say it does not strike him so seriously? Will he allege that, for his own part, he can afford to be slack on these points; and that he will, for his trust, fare forth into the unbounded freedom of reason and nature? Ah! that measureless field of reason and nature is too large to protect us. We are lost, we perish in it! Just as the whole great ball of the earth, with the vast spread of the atmosphere, is not a shelter for us; but, to preserve the body, guard health, and lengthen life, we must build a house on it against the wildness and the storm; so the house of God is our necessary retreat from the bleakness of an unfathomed universe, from tempests of mortal trial, and the winter of death. As, when the first

snow falls, and the north wind blows, every one rejoices in his roof and his hearth, so may we in the eaves of the sanctuary, and that fire of the Holy Ghost they cover. To run away from these, relying on nature and reason for a refuge, is like seeking the craggy, icy and blustering peaks for a dwelling. Some young men lately went forth, thinly clad, and trusting to themselves to reach the summit of one of our loftiest hills. When they started, the sun was warm, the breeze soft, the path grassy, and all was inviting. But soon the zephyr turned to a blast, and the sunshine seemed stiffening to frost, and the way had become flint, and the unmoving granite rocks around them seemed to be terribly working a petrification of stupor and death within. Benumbed and overwearied, they sat down to weep, and, had not assistance come to them, would have surely died. So is it with solitary wanderers in the light of their own minds through this mysterious creation towards


the incomprehensible eternity. The beginning flatters and allures, but the powers of nature fail on the ascent. The progress is deviation, and the end bewilderment and death. Names from among the living and the departed alike might be given in melancholy illustration of so untoward a destiny.

THE MARK OF THE CHRISTIAN. — Every large religious society has representatives to hinder or advance the Gospel of Christ in every quarter of the globe ; a representation none the less real, and it may be in some respects more effectual, because it is informal. Our sons or brothers go from us, and tread the busy walks of Paris or London. They mingle in with the sallow swarms that pour through the streets of Calcutta and Smyrna. They land on the islands in the gulf, or sail from point to point along the furthest South American shores ; and, wherever they go, they carry

an influence for or against the Christianity in which they have been born and baptized. Members of a Christian church now reside on a little island in the midst of the Atlantic sea. Beyond the lakes and mountains of the West may be those who have come up to the house of God in your company ; for there are those who have gone up in mine. "What impression did he leave?" I asked of one who had followed in the track of a friend, in his travels in the far East. "Everywhere," the answer was, "where he had been, was the mark of the Christian ; in Syria and Egypt, among the Mahometans and the Jews, with whomsoever he held converse, still the mark of the Christian." Christian character is a thing that always leaves its mark.

SCPTICISM AN INWARD CONDITION.—
When a man whose life has been devoted to pleasure, who has had, morning and

night, only the one thought of riches, or who has been assiduously all his days climbing up the ladder of earthly ambition, — when such a one tells me he does not believe in the immortality of the soul, I am not surprised. I believe it none the less, nor is it the less credible, for his disbelief. The wonder would be if he did believe it. His scepticism is his inward condition ; his retribution, the punishment of his selfish, fleshly course. Though heaven's gates should fly open before him, he could not properly enter into its joy and glory till the spiritual faculty of faith should be developed. So the tribes of the field walk about untouched, and in dull stupidity behold with the outward eye those splendors of the creation, whose matchless order thrills the musing and devout human heart with rapture.




HOW PROVE THE EXISTENCE OF GOD. —

Much is said of proving the existence of a God. Belief itself, as a power and disposition of the human soul, is a proof, and the great proof. No logical argument, metaphysical or natural, is so strong. How do I prove the existence of the material world? By any syllogisms of reasoning, or steps of philosophic demonstration? No; such proof is impossible. I prove it by my eyes, by my ears, and all the senses that bring me into correspondence with it. Seeing, hearing, feeling, I cannot doubt, I cannot argue. The world is a bright and glorious reality, with which I am in contact. I experience the world, and so need not demonstrate it.

Even such is the true proof of the being of God. It is to see and feel and commune with him. The most cunning ladder which speculation ever wove, the firmest bridge that natural theology ever constructed, will not carry us to him so surely as the

direct discernment, the holy consciousness, the immediate beholding, of our faith. Moses, we are told, lived as seeing Him that is invisible; and Christ has assured us that "the pure in heart shall see God." It is the moral and spiritual intuition of a justly exercised and exalted faith. We want no other reason for believing in God. Faith itself is the reason, and the best reason. As the beloved apostle declares, "He that believeth hath the witness in himself." We need nothing put under our faith to support that, any more than under our direct outward perceptions, our positive knowledge, the dictates of our consciences, or the affections of our hearts, going out to fix upon their appropriate objects. Like them, it is a radical part of our very constitution, — only a part which Christ has come specially to bring out, enrich, and ennoble with the truth he utters, and the actual objects he presents.

POWER OF A POSITIVE FAITH. — Positive faith, even though we have but a little, a few sentences, a creed of a hand-breadth, including simple and grand points, only embraced and held to vitally, — as dying martyrs have clasped the Bible or the cross to their bosoms, — will exert an astonishing influence. As it is said there is electricity enough latent in a drop of water, could it be developed from all its affinities, to charge a cloud, and make a shining thunderbolt, so there is power in the shortest and most obvious doctrines of our religion, in the very particles of faith, if practically brought out and applied, to dissolve our earthly reliances and revolutionize our lives.




HABIT OF FORBEARANCE. — Would you make yourself dear to every domestic scene you enter, form the habit of forbearance, and all your kindred will bless your face

for its own benediction. Your very coming in at the door shall be as a balm ; and that comfort is not insignificant which is repeated, a drop of sweetness in every draught, a thousand and a million times.

OUR SUPERSTITIONS. — We are amazed when we hear of the superstitious multitudes in a foreign town flocking, from the circuit of a thousand miles, in crowds, one endless procession, to see an ancient coat exhibited under the pretence of its being actually the garment once worn by Christ. But, if we trust in any way to external services and ceremonies, or to our peculiarity of these alone, for our salvation, our amazement had better be turned to ourselves.

QUIET WAY OF BUILDING UP CHARACTER. — You may dazzle men's eyes with large enterprises in philanthropy, but pos-

sess nothing of the philanthropic spirit ; and so you may do nothing wonderful in your whole life, yet, from your constant inward striving after holiness, the temple of God may at length stand in all its beauty in your heart. The mighty floods you see holden in mid air went not up with great commotion and fearful display, but ascended in invisible drops upon the sunbeams ; and it is but a slow perspiring from the hills that supplies the earth's exhaustless fountains.



BAD TEMPER.—Do you ask me where are the most discouraging triumphs of sin ? I will not point you to a few battle-fields, smoke-wreathed and reeking, those volcanoes of the human heart that loose its pent-up vapor and fire. War is a great evil in the world, but want of temper is a greater. I intend no paradox ; soberly I believe the fretfulness of human life is a greater evil,

and destroys more happiness, than all the tramlings of invasion and conquest. There is excitement of thought as well as passion in war. Mighty ideas of right may mingle in its motives, heroic endurance of every hardship attends its progress, and saving the sacred palladium of freedom is sometimes its result. But the excitable peevishness that kindles at trifles, that roughens the daily experience of a million families, that scatters its little stings at the table and by the hearth-stone, that introduces a prickle into the whole clothing and movement of life, what does this but unmixed harm? What ingredient does it furnish but of gall? Its fine wounding may be of petty consequence in any given case, and its tiny darts easily extracted ; but, when habitually carried into the whole texture of life, it destroys more peace than plague and famine and the sword. It is a deeper anguish than grief or the gasp of death ; it is a sharper pang than the afflicted moan with ; it is a heavier press-

ure from human hands than you feel when the Almighty "hath touched you."

DIVINE INFLUENCE NECESSITATES HUMAN EXERTION. — We might as well say that the builder of a house or vessel is exempted from toil and personal accountableness by the precious loads of timber or granite that lie hugely around him, as that the soul is excused from labor and activity by the truths, motives, merciful offers and invitations, of the Gospel. These but assign our work, and set our holy and life-long task.

BIBLE TESTIMONIES CONCERNING THE NATURE OF MAN. — Revelation gives but little express and formal instruction concerning human nature, because, perhaps, of the little need of any supernatural information about that which everybody may know from the world and his own heart. The inspired writers generally take man as

they find him ; assume his character as it appears at particular times and in special circumstances. Those passages whose strong language is so eagerly quoted as decisive are almost always local in their application, and their force definitely restricted by the context.

Still, not alone for speculative but practical reasons, we would know, if we may on divine authority, — and not merely judge by experience, or reason on grounds of philosophy, — what our nature is. There are, to this end, some sentences in the New Testament, whose conclusiveness I feel there is no way of resisting. Observe that we wish to know, not the acquired character, but the original nature, of the human soul. This nature exists pure only in the child. This the advocates of the doctrine of total depravity, I presume, all admit ; for their language is that we are born depraved, that sin is innate, hereditary, substantial in the very essence and constitution of the mind. The soul of

a child is therefore its absolute principle and embodiment. Now, we have six parallel declarations of the evangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke, on this very point, expressing, not what they thought of the child's nature, but what Christ thought and declared ; that is, six passages giving the decision of the highest authority in religion ever in the world. The burden of these passages is, that of such as little children is the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven ; that to be converted, and become like them, is the only and necessary title of entrance into that kingdom ; that to be humble as a child makes one the greatest in that kingdom ; that to receive a child in Christ's name is to receive him ; and, in still another passage, he gives it as a warning against despising one of these little ones, that their angels (by which, I think, he must mean the spirits of departed children) do always behold the face of his Father in heaven. Strictly speaking, I know not that there

are in the Christian records any other testimonies upon the primary, simple nature of man ; and upon these testimonies I decline all reasoning.

SCALE OF NEED. — Our need answers to our capacity. We might, indeed, construct a scale of existence on this principle of need. The lower the creature, the less his need ; for the more feeble his sensibilities, narrow his powers, and torpid his desires. The shell-fish yonder needs but to draw in, from the beating waves, or through a slender aperture in the muddy bottom of the sea, a little water, and then expel the same through those stony valves which are at once his defence and his dwelling. His finny swimming superior, with a more versatile power, needs a somewhat richer nutriment. The insect, with its still finer organization, needs to fly in the air, and to feed on the sweets of flowers. The beast, of structure more complex, and increased

capabilities, needs a still greater variety of support ; the cravings of each kind of animal nature multiplying according exactly to its additional susceptibilities of sensation, intelligence and affection ; from the creature that is satisfied with a green leaf, and, that consumed, creeps slowly and lazily to another, to the fierce or kingly birds that cut the air of a hemisphere, and seek their prey on the far mountain-top, or "where the carcass is" in the lonely valley.

But, from the most sagacious and strongest of the animal tribes, how vast the difference, in capacity of intellect and feeling, to man ! And no less vast the difference of need. He draws from the earth, from the water, and from the air, to satisfy his appetites and to satiate his curiosity ; he ransacks every kingdom of nature for his comfort and aggrandizement, and is not content. His restless and changeful wishes are ever roaming abroad for something new, something better, something greater.

He cannot stay attached to one place, "like the limpet to the rock." He cannot stop with one sort of food, like the bee that royes among the blossoms. He does not, like the ruminating animal, stand still and peaceful in his own reflections. Nor, though he should leave his anchorage on the ground, soar into the sky, and, for his clumsy balloon, substitute the wings of a dove, could he even then "fly away and be at rest." He is uneasy, he is needy, he is craving and discontented, still. It is because his faculties are so many and so great, because his desires are so ardent and so infinite, that his supplies must be manifold and huge.

Is there, then, no satisfaction for a man? Are we alone in the universe made to be thus uneasy and discontented, like peevish children wanting what we cannot have, and crying for what is beyond our reach? No; God has not made his noblest creature for a wretched failure and a miserable want. Let him bring into light all his

abilities and desires,—they are not too many or too strong ; those of the higher nature as well as the lower ; those that tend up to God himself and heaven and immortality, as well as those that tend downwards and abroad to earthly things. Let him unfold them without fear. The vast supplies from the foreseeing Creator, in the treasury of his truth, are ready. Let him appropriate them to his need. And the fish that cleaves the liquid sea, the insect that revels in the cup of a flower, the beast that browses in his pasture, or the bird that darts through the yielding air, shall be no more at home or content with its lot than he ; while the lot he is content with shall be as much superior to theirs as “ the heaven and the heaven of heavens ” are above the earth.

OUR IMPERFECTION SPRINGS FROM OUR GREATNESS. — It is the greatness of that for which we were made which is the ex-

planation of our imperfection. The mushroom may shoot up and be perfect in a night. The green grass may rise and fall twice in a season beneath the summer sun. But the strong and beautiful diamond must mature in its secret caverns, while the generations of the forest, alike with those of flesh and blood, pass away. The star that glitters like God's signet, sparkling too brilliant in the clear evening air for the eye to fix its shape, sprang not into instantaneous being, but, as astronomy would now teach, began to form, innumerable ages bygone, in dim and dark mist; revolving and condensing, and gathering pale light, ray after ray, as century after century rolled along, till what fell perhaps on the eye of Adam as a pearly cloud in the profound remote heavens, shoots a fiery radiance now over land and sea. Even so dimly and darkly forms this human nature of ours, revolving amid unshaped elements in the spiritual firmament, condensing—if a moral truthfulness to


God be taken for its law — ever into more consistent and substantial brightness, and preparing, by the grace of God and under the influences of his Gospel, to shine as those stars now shine forever in the heavens, when their flames may be extinguished in endless night.

O, this is a far-reaching nature of ours ; its very birthright immortality, and Christianity that birthright's seal ! All sin and folly stain and degrade it wofully, hinder its rise and progress dreadfully, but destroy it not. "Man's grief is grandeur in disguise, and discontent is immortality." Be patient, son of man, who judgest thy kind, — patient with its deviations and mistakes, as God is patient ; and believe that patient Father still made it beautiful, and for most beautiful issues, while tears mourn its errors, and faithful strivings elevate its course. He who complains of this imperfection complains of that crown which God Almighty has set on his head.

THE LAX DOCTRINE CONCERNING MAN'S NATURE. — If human nature be fatally subjected to the law of the members, the helpless sport and hapless victim of appetite and passion, then to talk of human sinfulness at all is a fiction of speech. A machine cannot sin. Sin is wicked, unlawful choice. Necessity has no choice or law : and mankind, instead of being thus convicted of their actual transgressions, are universally absolved, and made as innocent as the animals in obeying their irresistible instincts. Thus, a great objection to the doctrine of total depravity is, that it takes a light view of sin, a technical and negative view, from which the sinner easily escapes. Under the semblance of a severe, it is really a licentious doctrine.

INWARD ROUGHNESS OF NATURE. — Is not man a nobler being for having had the material world given to him ragged with

mountain and ravine, foaming with gulfs and seas, instead of a smooth table-land, sunny and rich in sensual delight, with mines of treasure on the surface, needing no subterranean search? Is not man honored by the stirring precept in Genesis, to "subdue the earth and have dominion over it"? And may he not be a nobler being, also, for the inward roughness of his own nature, for the very wildness of his passions, for the very hardness of that soil where his virtues are sown? O, yes; here is another region for labor more severe, and dominion more extensive. Here is the other world Alexander might have conquered, and spared his tears that there was no other to conquer. Here are chances for glory beyond all the dreams of ambition; for "he that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city."



POWER OF CONSCIENCE. — Very striking are the words of the evangelist: "For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man, and an holy." Feared John there in prison? feared the helpless captive, bound and confined far from the sight of a friend? A trait how deeply true to the human soul! Yes, vice must respect virtue all the time; ever putting it to shame, countermining and insulting it, banishing it, loading it with chains, it must fearfully respect it. Is it not so, my brother? Whenever you have been the aggressor in any difference or quarrel with a fellow-man, though you may have added defence to defence, and piled vindication on vindication, have you been able, after all, to uproot a deep-seated regard even for him you differed with? When the passion and turbid commotion of the hour have passed by, has not that solemn regard subsided to the very bottom of your mind, and, in the light of transparent reflection,

made you ashamed of yourself, if not caused you to stand aghast at the wrong you see scored against you, as with the point of a diamond, on the page of your own heart ! So was it, indeed, with Herod. He had not got wholly rid of the prophet, by immuring him in that lonely cell, where he could hear, as he lay awake in the night-watches, only the whistling of the wind and the dull wash of the waves of the Dead Sea near the castle-walls. John had left a barbed arrow in Herod's heart, and he could not draw it out ; but there it clung still, and rankled beneath his robe of gold and jewels, and mixed a sharp pang ever and anon with the sweetest of his pleasures. While, under that camel's hair and that old leathern girdle, in the prison, the pulse was calm, for no guilty feeling made it intermit ; but the approval of conscience, the pledge of the approbation of God, gave unbroken peace. Which was the favored, the truly happy man of the two, — Herod, unable to drown self-upbraiding in feasting

and wine, or the Baptist, with light at the centre, and a holy love there, which the cold and the gloom that enveloped him could not quench? God for him in the prison, and against his oppressor in the palace, and each one knowing the whole fact with respect to both!

Time wears on. Pleasure holds undisputed reign in the regal dwelling; and the momentary sorrow of Herod, at having enacted so dreadful a tragedy, seems whelmed and lost in the full stream of uninterrupted prosperity. But rumor at length bears dimly from afar to the purlieus of the court strange tidings of mighty works, such as no living mortal had ever before beheld. And what a singular spectacle now! King Herod does not rebut the account with any sneering scepticism. Lo! a thing strange and extraordinary,—the murderer a believer! Some of the Jews denied the genuineness of the miracles performed before their eyes. Herod accepts them at a mere hint, a dim rumor,

without ever having seen. He believes that the man whom he had slain, and whose very head had been put into the keeping of a Herodias' revenge, has now got up out of his winding-sheet, in which for months his body had lain cold and mouldering, to perform—what? Wonderful deeds of omnipotence, to which, when alive, he had never pretended. Ah! the voice of conscience, the never quite-silenced voice, that will speak on in the most guilty heart; will make itself heard through all the inward stiflings of evil passion, and all the outward smotherings of a worldly life; will grow tender in the very spot where it has been seared, and pure under the very baseness with which it has been polluted! O, the power of conscience, that could lay such a grasp on the soul of a Herod,—Herod, the true son of that Herod who, at the time of Christ's birth, had slain the innocent children, and filled Rama with the lamentations of Rachel mourning and not to be comforted, because her children

were not ! Yes, the power of conscience, I repeat ; for I would that every one might stand in reverential awe before that which will, if not now, at some time, manifest its power to the confusion and grief of all who do not revere it. For who is this tetrarch Herod, now so quick to believe in the earthly resurrection of a man whose ghastly visage he had seen brought in, in a charger ? He — can it be believed ? — is a Sadducee, a member of that sect of whom we are told, that, like some persons still, they utterly rejected all idea of the resurrection of the dead, and held to the existence of neither angel nor spirit. He it is, a Sadducee of the Sadducees, that verily believes John the Baptist, whom he beheaded, has risen from the dead ! For an energy within him, stronger than this curious and captious infidelity so ostentatiously paraded, has opened all the moral sensibilities of his nature ; and the little sceptical creed which he had built in his speculative intellect, as a house on the sand, and of which he

had made a proud, worldly profession, is borne off upon the irresistible tide of feeling, which electrifies him into an admission of the supremacy of the spirit, and of the reality of the powers of the world to come.

SENSE AND FAITH. — An unseen and heavenly world is required to correspond to our faith, just as much as a material world to correspond to our senses. I stand in the midst of nature on some lovely spring morning. The sweet and pleasant light salutes my eyes. The fresh and bland breeze mingles with the warmth of the sun, fanning his beams as they fall, to give that perfect and temperate luxury which makes the feeling even of physical life a delight. The fragrance of flowers from every bright and waving branch, dressed in pale and crimson, floats to me. The song of 'matin birds falls on my ear. All this beauty, melody and richness, are

the correspondence to my nature of the material world through my senses.

Now, there are inward perceptions and intuitions, just as real as these outward ones, and requiring spiritual realities to correspond with them, just as much as the eye requires the landscape, or as the ear asks for sounds of the winds and woods and streams, for the song of birds, or the dearer accents of the human voice. To meet and answer the very nature of man, a spiritual world, more refined modes of existence, action, happiness, must be, — just as there must be space without for his physical motions, and color for the discriminations of his sight, and modulation of tones for his hearing, — else his nature, satisfied and fed in one direction, and that the lowest, is balked, belied and starved, in another direction, and that the highest.



ACTION FOLLOWS REAL FAITH. — The man who is assured and positively believes that some European relative has left him an immense fortune, which personal attention is necessary to secure, sits not down to rest upon this as an abstract speculation, amusing with it his thoughts, but rises, departs, crosses the sea, with energetic and nice procedure, to fulfil the conditions of the case. The adventurer, listening to a tale of rivers which, like the ancient Pactolus, flow over golden sands on the far Pacific coast, is not satisfied with it as a tale that he can pleasantly relate to other greedy ears, but embarks, throwing himself and his all on the single cast. The sick man, learning of sunny climes which have a balsam in the very air to pour healing through the avenues of disease, bids adieu to all, however dear, in home and friends and native land, — for the sake of the body, the poor, perishing body, that must here, there, or somewhere, find and fall into its earthly grave, — to seek the

warm isle or southern continental shore. And, O, the sinner, spiritually poor, empty, sickly, if he believe in a Redeemer who can break the power of sin, and raise him above his own selfish and wayward will into the life of virtue and of God, will not stay long in cool debate respecting the origin and person of that Redeemer, but will run to him, as, in all his instructions and precepts, life and death, the enricher, benefactor, physician, of his soul.

CHRISTMAS AND EASTER. — Alas ! these exultations over any of the great circumstances of our Lord's history become somewhat sad to the soul, when we ask that searching question, how far they are formal and nominal, and how far a real and spiritual thing. The green bough, taken as the symbol of the rejoicings over Christ's birth, not only gladdens but grieves me, when I see it hanging at the window of a worldly, self-seeking man, who appears to

be no less worldly and self-seeking that he has hung it there. And the observance of the set time of lamentation over Christ's cross, lamentation for the sins and passions of the human heart (for what else in that wonderful scene of Christ's moral and spiritual glory was there to lament over?) that lifted up that innocent form, and nailed those hands and feet strong and swift only for errands of mercy,—the observance itself becomes an unspeakable sorrow and a bitter shame, if our human passions and our unforsaken sins go on all the same before that unparalleled spectacle at which the sun in heaven veiled his face, and the earth beneath was shaken.

THE PARENTAL OFFICE. — What trust so great to our hands as that of a living spirit, with its own individual nature, distinguished from all other rational intelligences, and with capacities for a peculiar development of intellectual and moral

strength ; in short, a new character in the universe of God, and a fresh candidate for immortality ! With what a reverent, sober, trembling sense of responsibility it should be received ! What office that men crave and strive for is so high in rank, so great in opportunity, so large in patronage, or susceptible of good, with such hope and fear, promise and menace, wrapped up in it, as this parental office ! What expanding of outward nature, or unfolding of earthly policy and ambition, is really so grand and affecting as that of an undying soul ; as we see intellectual animation flow by such subtle degrees into the countenance, and ever-added expression beam from the features ; as thought wakens after thought, and feeling after feeling, to take their place among the lines and motions of every trait and member ; as the will plays, it may be at first rashly and capriciously, with its new-found, but soon to be mighty, sceptre on its little throne in that slender breast ; as

the kind affections come out to cling to us, and tame childish waywardness, while the conscience, too, begins to assert its lordship, and the dawning idea of God, the greatest that can visit the mind of man or archangel, with its majestic authority, subdues disobedience to the laws of righteousness and truth !

TRIED, BUT TRUSTING. — As I walked through the lanes of yonder growing forest, on our beautiful common, the dry leaves crushing under my feet, and the sinking sun taking his last look at the bare boughs of the trees, I met a man on whom the blow of grief had descended as sorely as upon any, and with oft-repeated stroke. A new sorrow had just fallen on his gray head, and long-diseased, emaciated frame. While I approached, he was slowly eying the setting sun. As he turned his face towards me, I looked to see the marks of deep, un-comforted sadness wearing mournfully in

upon his features. But, no ; not a trace of trouble in that eye which had so often looked on death in the forms of those he had most loved. His vision gleamed as though a light beyond that of the setting sun had fallen upon it. He spoke ; — and now, thought I, the secret melancholy will peradventure come forth, and mingle in the tone, though this unnatural excitement be kindled in the eye. No ; pleasant was the voice, without one plaintive note. He spoke of faith. He spoke of loyalty to God and duty. He spoke of heaven as though it were near. He said nothing of being hardly dealt with, nor hinted aught about not understanding why *he* should be selected for such trials, but seemed to think there was nothing but God's mercy and kindness in the world. He bore a staff to support his drooping limbs. But he seemed to me, as I looked upon him, to have an inward stay that would hold him up when all earthly props had fallen to the ground. He was a Christian believer ;

and, though prospered of God in this world, he said, "The riches we think so much of gathering together are nothing in comparison with the better portion that rich and poor alike may attain." We parted; and, as I walked alone again among the fading, rustling leaves, they took up new eloquence of meaning. The bare, cold ground, the gray, chilly sky, and the long shadows, that told of the lengthening night, seemed beautiful—yes, pleasant and beautiful—to my soul; more beautiful even than the herbage and balm, and long, long sunny hours of the enlivening spring. For once, the contrast between earth and heaven was revealed to my mind; and the dissolving emblems of mortality under my feet, and the cold, shifting mists over my head, were transformed from sad tokens into symbols of hope and joy.



FRAGMENT OF AN ARCH. — A late traveller observed in the city of Jerusalem the fragment of an arch on the wall of the temple ; and, tracing it according to the principles of its construction, concluded it must have been designed to spring as a bridge across the adjoining valley. So, if this little arc of the human mind, which we can here trace, be constructed upon true principles, it must mount over the dark valley of the shadow of death, the stream of time must flow away beneath it, while the course of an immortal destination opens before it. Else, denying this, we charge the supreme Architect with fault.

WHAT IS IMPLIED BY A KNOWLEDGE OF OUR IGNORANCE AND FEEBLENESS. — The Scriptures abound in reflections upon the weakness and short-sightedness of the human mind. Now, it is observable that the atheist and sceptic have taken up the strain of Scripture, and striven to turn its weapons

against itself and its friends. "How blind and weak, how poor and miserable," they repeat, "the creature to whom you yet assign so splendid a destiny ! You speak of the immortality of this worm, as you yourself call him ; of this ignorant being, whose comprehension a grain of dust baffles ; this impotent being, whom heat and cold, light and darkness, wet and drought, play with and scorn ; this wretched being, whom sickness prostrates, and misfortune depresses, and sorrow dissolves in tears ; the most helpless of all creatures at his birth, the most unsatisfied of all through his life ; you prophesy for *him* 'glory and honor and immortality' !"

I accept the issue which atheism and infidelity thus present. I will reason for the magnificent prospects of man on the very ground here taken of his weaknesses and diseases, his griefs and fears. I will show that there is no incongruity in Holy Writ, when in one breath it tells of man's miseries and vanities, and in the next of

his unending life and glories. For, "*I know in part*:" what does this mean, but that I have an idea of more knowledge than I actually possess, believe myself capable of greater acquisitions, and see the domain of wisdom stretching out beyond my present reach, inviting my further pursuit? Why be straitened in my limits, but that my true element is the unbounded? Knowing so little, why not rest content with this small modicum? Why, indeed, *know* that I am ignorant? Ah! it is this knowledge of my ignorance that contains the seed of my immortal aspiration. The brute, grazing in the field, is ignorant, too, but dreams not of any insufficiency of information, aims at nothing more. But man's intellect puzzles itself ever upon new doubts and difficulties of investigation. Nor will I be sorry that there are points he cannot reconcile, questions he has reasoned upon for ages without settling, and sciences still imperfect and ill-understood.

They are the promise of food for his eternal activity.

TESTIMONY OF CONSCIOUSNESS CONCERNING THE NATURE OF MAN. — But it may be said, that, besides Scripture and observation, there is yet another witness in the case, whose testimony respecting human nature is conclusive, and that is, human consciousness, — the sense and confession everywhere in the world of depravity. Knowing ourselves, we know that the moving spring is wrong, that our evil affections bring forth evil actions, that a black drop runs through the very circulations of our being. But this is not the whole of human consciousness. The soul of man is conscious of much else ; of a vital connection with God, by which it “feels after, if haply it might find him ;” of a law of right, revered even when broken ; of good affections, though checked by evil desires ; and of noble aims, though warped

by the wind and stream of worldly lust and passion. Were depravity total, it could never be confessed. Remorse implies some spiritual excellence ; and the very consciousness of sin supposes a germ and beginning of virtue. Were depravity the total or overpowering fact in life, the reality of our experience would be worse even than Byron's gloomy fiction of human nature :

“ How beautiful is all this visible world !
How glorious in its action and itself !
But we, who name ourselves its sovereigns, we,
Half dust, half deity, alike unfit
To sink or soar, with our mixed essence make
A conflict of its elements, and breathe
The breath of degradation and of pride,
Contending with low wants and lofty will
Till our mortality predominates,
And men are — what they name not to themselves,
And trust not to each other.”

But were the received, so much darker, doctrine of depravity true, men not only would not name, but could not even know it !

Accordingly, the consciousness or the confession of sin exists not, or but in lesser degrees, in the worst men. The most moving acknowledgments of the plague of iniquity are not from the vile, but from the noble, when they have let their nobleness, as a white escutcheon, be stained. It is such men as Job, and David, Paul, St. Augustine, and Luther, that have stood meekly at the world's great confessional, bitterly to own their transgression. The record of their lives seconds our acquaintance with good men, and our knowledge of our own hearts, to show that moral progress alone gives a perception of "the sinfulness of sin;" and that they who have most occasion for alarm and suspicion of their spiritual state are not such confessors, but the men who pass along with light and easy step, unaware of anything wrong in their relations to their Maker. In the biographies of saints, it is remarkable, too, how every new advance in holiness more reveals to them the enormity of

wrong-doing ; makes disobedience to God swell up into all its gigantic proportions, and discloses every lurking subtlety and evasion of vice, just as the waxing light of day shows alike every mountain and cave with the slightest uneven surface. As we become children of the light, our conscience seems to take on a heavier load ; we detect the quality of guilt in things where we had not imagined it, become impatient of habits we had borne without a wish to shake off, and are startled from exposed situations of moral disease and death where we had slept and dreamed of happiness.

O, no ; this consciousness and confession are not evidence of depravity alone, but of a nature designed and made for all purity and worth. Humiliation and self-upbraiding are no descent, but steps on the ladder that reaches up to heaven. The cry, " God be merciful to me a sinner," is not the voice of an heir to perdition, but of a chosen candidate for the society of angels. Nor, in the secrets of this confes-

sional, which stands more in the heart's chamber than in the priest's closet, does it appear to be our nature which the self-reproaching soul decries, but its abuse and perversion. The guilty, in their honest avowals, lay their burdens at their own door, and do not shift them upon their Creator or on human ancestry. Their sin has been their own consent to temptation, the consent of beings capable of loving and serving God ; else it surely would not be sin, but misfortune, fate, accident, or divine infliction. Nay, but for these capabilities of lofty affections, which faintly at least stir within them, they could not morally suffer for their faults and shortcomings. Their melancholy is, that the celestial in them has been betrayed to the earthly. In the conflict of the breast, the unrighteous cause has for the moment triumphed. But the struggle shall be renewed. The forces of conscience and the spirit within never entirely surrender. The prize for which the fight is main-

tained is too glorious to be resigned ; the shame at its temporary loss, too burning to be endured. The conviction of sin before God is before the tribunal, too, of one's own soul ; the uncorrupted judge, as well as the criminal, is there. So the consciousness is two-fold, the confession is resolve.

ACCIDENTAL RELATIONS. — The traveller in a foreign land often feels sorely the loss of that character given him by accidental relations at home. Everything adventitious being stripped off, he is thrown back upon his personal qualities, and must stand or fall according to the judgment passed upon those. Now, how much more surely must such things forsake us, when we proceed, each one in his own time, attended by no companion, leaning on no arm of flesh, a solitary pilgrim, on our last journey to the skies ! The heir of rich estates shall leave behind the splendor of wealth and the flattery of retainers. The haughty

lord must disrobe himself of badges and stars of honor, and be addressed no more with his hereditary titles of reverence. He that now shines in a reflected lustre from the circle of society in which he moves will soon find himself in darkness, unless he have fed the inward light of truth and virtue. Even the man who marches on in the hosts of philanthropy will soon stand alone, uncheered by the sympathy of thousands, unsustained by the stimulus of enterprise ; for his secret motive must be determined, whether it be a pure benevolence, or a selfish desire of human praise and worldly advancement.

SELF-LOVE AND SELF-WORSHIP. — There is an old fable of one who perished admiring his own beauty reflected to him from a fountain. Nor could there be a surer way of moral destruction, than making favorable contrasts of our rectitude with that of others. The Holy Ghost, chief thing for

which we pray, does no such business for us as this. It is but the miserable doing of our atheistic self-love, one of those works of our own by which we cannot be saved. That esteem of ourselves which is, conversely, severity of judgment to our fellow-creatures, is no gift from on high, but the inspiration of our own pride and vanity ; and, while launching bolts of denunciation against another, it more fatally smites us with the recoil of the weapon. The fanatic is "hoist with his own petard." Then, when, beyond lonely egotism, a proud company of people banded together, however numerous, but one shred torn from the whole body and membership of Christ, come to think themselves alone heirs of salvation, and venture to doom all beside to ruin, no subtle change is wrought in the quality of the wrong and irreligious feeling they manifest, by reason of the number of those through whom it is displayed. The guilt of a presumptuous conceit is not diminished, but only accumulated, by

being so widely shared. It is but a wretched multiplication of self-worship and a strange permutation of self-love. It is still the same vanity swelling into arithmetical progression, and trying to lose its own shame in hiding behind its neighbor. It is no sword of the Lord against his foes, but a galvanic battery of unchristian arrogance against his children. It inaugurates that peculiar style of speech in which so frequently recur the words "we" and "us," as indicating the authority to which all should be referred. We read that a disciple of Christ once said to him, "Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us; and we forbade him, because he followeth not us." Truly, the Master's immediate rebuke might still well fall on many ears! Could we, in this connection, get rid of those little words, the church would be disabused of most of its sorrows and sins. For, surely, the object is not for others to approach or

follow us, but for us all to approach and follow after Christ.

THE LADDER OF EXTERNAL FORMS. — It may be said, These external forms and ordinances are surely not the object or end of religion, and, therefore, deserve from us no such earnest attention. True, they are not the end. The end is the spirit's everlasting consecration to God and duty. But, if the end is important, are not the means important? If the reality and essence be of supreme concern, shall we despise the steps by which we may attain to it? On this ladder the angels, now pure ethereal flames, went up, not spurning the degrees by which they rose, and we must ascend. The way worn by so many passing generations should be to us only the more dear. This general plea stands, of course, independent of any particular criticism of the varieties of service and procedure in different portions of the

Christian church. Rome or London or Geneva may have each one its own peculiarity of religious manners. We have our order, handed down to us by our fathers with no overloading weight of ceremony, no excessive number of exercises, and no tedious consumption of time. It is as simple as the New Testament. It is the least we can do in testimony of our social allegiance to God, and fidelity to his Son. The heathens thought their gods would be angry, and national misfortunes befall, if the sacrifices were withheld. We may count this a superstition, or smile at it as a pleasant fable. But we cannot imagine the true and living God will be pleased with a contempt of the worship he has ordained, and the rites his representative Messiah has sanctioned ; or that any benefit can follow in the morality, happiness and peace of a people, by whom so reasonable a service is slept over, wearied of, or set aside. If we will not turn all the sacred traditions of the Gospel, the work of

the revealing spirit and divine providence, into a pile of vanity, hither, then, let us come to pay our holy tribute together to our Author.

POWER OF CHRISTIAN MAGNANIMITY. —

We are never to quit the post of religious sincerity and Christian magnanimity, whatever insults or opposition we may meet. Our great Teacher and Pattern forbade any resistance to the soldiers sent to take him, saying that a prayer to his Father would bring more than twelve legions of angels for his guard. O, yes ; had it been his object to be guarded, the troops of heaven would have mustered innumerable on the earth. But he would guard only the principles of truth and the glory of God ; and their everlasting defence was in his unopposing submission. Their weapon was a wound unresisted ; their eloquence was scorn calmly accepted ; their sign of universal victory was not the

Roman legionary's spear, but the cross which flamed in the sky to the vision of Constantine, and must flame mildly on as the standard of Christ's soldiers till it conquers the world.

EXPANSIVE POWER OF ANY VITALLY-HELD TRUTH. — So marvellous is this principle of faith by means of that element of divine truth it lays hold on, that, as our Saviour declared, an amount of it so small as to be fitly symbolized by a grain of mustard-seed can "remove mountains," operating in the moral world as in the material do the most potent substances of nature. Accept any doctrine of God's revelation vitally, whether a doctrine of his attributes and purposes, or any one of his attributes or purposes, or of our own nature, capacity, responsibility, and destiny; and it will leave nothing in us, from the foundation to the summit of character, untouched; but, noiselessly penetrating like light and

air, and cleansing as a baptism of water and fire, it will alter and improve our whole being. Like the single grain, that has sown a continent ; like the particle of odor, whose perfume has lasted for a century ; like the well-worn instrument, that has served in unnumbered scenes of trial, so its virtue will spread and pierce and last. Under its ennobling influence, we shall feel we have the best of God's gifts, envying no man's wit or learning or genius, but adopting the sentiment of the great philosopher, who, in the midst of the treasures of science of all ages and the added results of his own search and study, declared he regarded a firm religious faith as the greatest of blessings.

SMALL THINGS.—It is not great but small things, not imposing but humble deeds, that make up the great sum of good influence. The mites and farthings are more than the shekels and talents. It is

not a few splendid gifts, but countless small ones, which keep the virtue of charity alive, supply the needs of a million sufferers, and give ample support to all good institutions. A deluge does not water the earth ; but the tender roots spring under the fine drops of the universal rain. Look at all the great associations for the support of government, education, philanthropy, religion. How are they kept in being? Not chiefly by costly gifts, but by humble offerings. It is not the talents, but the mites, by which they are nourished. The great structures of science and art are built by the ceaseless contributions of millions, as the little insects of the sea toil on without rest, till a new continent breaks through its waters.

MAN'S DIGNITY INFERRED FROM HIS DEFECTS. — It is usual to draw religious arguments from man's positive abilities ; but I would draw them from his vast defects. It is usual to draw them from his great

triumphs ; I would draw them from his signal failures. It is usual to draw them from his vigor and joy ; but I would draw them from his weakness and grief. It is usual from his wide knowledge to predict a splendid destiny ; but I would predict it from his wider ignorance. It is usual to celebrate his shining virtues ; I would see him lifting his moral victories out of the abysses of conscious degradation, and observe his dignities springing from the depth of his decays. Even in the horror of death and annihilation, so peculiar to man, and unshared by the animal, I would see the sign of immortality. In the very sharpness of domestic grief, I would note a like indication. The brute parts from its companion without a pang, or with but a brief and indistinct sadness. But the days of man's mourning for the dear departed are never accomplished. Wherefore, but that the tie is in the undying soul? Rejoice, then, that you do sorrow. Hope because you lament. If you could commit the

precious remains to the ground without emotion, you would lose one token and proof of your destination to an eternal being. Your very sighs breathe of immortality ; your groans preach it ; your funeral rites bespeak it.

STRUGGLE FOR PERFECTION. — In yonder village a painter paces, in quiet meditation, his little room. Beautiful pictures has he sent forth to charm every beholder ; but he alone is not satisfied. He draws some grand theme from the mighty chronicle of the Bible. He would turn the words of the rapt prophet into colors. He would hold up to the eyes of men a scene of the divine judgments, that should awe down every form of sin, and exalt every resolve of holiness in their hearts. The finished result of his labors is shortly expected. But the idea of perfection has seized with an overmastering grasp upon him, and it must give him pause. How shall that

awful writing of doom be pencilled on the plastered wall? How shall that finger, as it were of a man's hand, and yet the finger of God, be revealed? How shall those voluptuous forms below, that have been all relaxed with the wine and the feast and the dalliance of the hour, be represented in their transition so swift to conscience-stricken alarm, prostrate terror, ineffectual rage, and palsied suspense, as they are confronted by those flaming characters of celestial indignation, which the soothsayers, with magic scrolls, and strange garb, and juggling arts, can but mutter and mumble over, and only the servant of Almighty God calmly explain? How shall it be done according to the perfect pattern shown in the Mount of Revelation of God's Word? The artist thinks and labors, month by month, and year after year. The figures of Babylonish king and consort, of Hebrew seer and maiden, and of Chaldee magician, grow into expressive portraits under his hand. The visible

grandeur of God the judge, over against the presumptuous sins of man, approaches its completeness. The spectator would now be entranced with the wondrous delineation. But the swiftly-conceiving mind which shapes out its imaginations of that dread tribunal, so suddenly set up in the hall of revelry, is not yet content. The idea of perfection that smote it smites it again. The aspiration after a new and higher beauty, that carried it to one point, lifts it to another, and bears it far aloft, in successive flights, ever above its own work. Yet still, on those few feet of canvas, the earnest laborer breathes out, for the best of a lifetime, the patient and exhaustless enthusiasm of his soul. He hides the object, dear as a living child to its mother, from every eye, and presses on to the mark. If he walks, he catches a new trait of expression, some new line of lustrous illumination, to transfer to this painted Scripture which he is composing. If he sleeps, some suggestion of an improvement will steal

even into his dreams. In weariness and in sickness, he still climbs slowly, painfully, to his task. In absence, his soul turns back, and makes all nature tributary to his art. And on his expiring day he seizes his pencil to strive, by another stroke still, after the perfection which flies before him, and leaves his work as with the last breath of his mouth, and movement of his hand, upon it, to show, amid unfinished groups, and the measured lines for a new trial, that, if absolute perfection cannot be reached here on earth, yet heights of splendor and excellence can be attained beyond all the thoughts of him whom the glorious idea has never stirred. What a lesson for us in our moral and religious struggles ! What a rebuke for our idle loiterings in the heavenward way ! What a shame to our doubtings about that perfection to which God and Christ and apostles call !



PASSING AWAY. —The traveller in foreign lands tells us the most striking impression of the great works of art is the shadowy, transitory life of their framers. We rear monuments in our church-yards and in our beautiful city of the dead ; yet what are our houses but mausoleums, and our streets but lines of memorial structures, in which have lain corpses unnumbered ! Our dwellings cry to us, with the Scripture, “ Arise and depart, for this is not your rest ! ” Let the sense of life’s uncertainty breathe through us, not only when we tread the silent aisles of man’s final resting-place, but as we walk amid the bustling crowd, so soon to be hushed into what stillness ! Within the door, upon which, as we go by, our eye carelessly falls, the last sands of life may be running. So have I passed the gate of my friend, and knew not it could never open again at his touch. Wait not till church-yards and graves come into your mind, but look upon the chamber where you lie at rest as to be

soon the witness of your mortality, the container of your clay. Think of the threshold at which you daily enter as that from which soon, in your coffin, you must be borne. O, could "the stone cry out from the wall, and the beam out of the timber answer," as in the vision of Habakkuk, would not a low murmur from every human abode, reared long enough for the weather-stain, through all your daily walks, be continually saluting your ears, "Set thine house in order," "Prepare to meet thy God" ?

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"DEATH IS YOURS." — Certainly this is a very peculiar view of death. Death ordinarily presents itself to us as a misery, not as a privilege ; as the inevitable termination of all we have experienced, and pursued, and delighted in, not as itself another boon ; as something that nature recoils from, not welcomes. And, lo ! the apostle would take it into the catalogue of great

possessions ! In a rapture of holy joy, and a strain of exalted eloquence, he appropriates it to the rich and boundless estate of his converts. He marvellously calls in “ the king of terrors ” among the ministers of comfort ; puts the last enemy into the list of friends ; and makes the robber, who has laid waste earth’s cities and villages, who steals away all that is bright and beautiful and happy, and puts the riches of a million homes and myriad hearts in his unfilled pit, — makes him to be a generous patron, to whom we are in debt and under obligations.

DEATH NOT A SMALL CIRCUMSTANCE. — Death is often piously spoken of as a circumstance in life. But it is not a small circumstance. The time arrives for this temple of the human body to be taken down. What a building it is ! Have you ever pondered its marvellous construction, the fluted columns of its strength with

cunning joints, the firm bands that move "wheel within wheel" its various circles, the ebb and flow of its vital currents in the heart, the net of communication with its citadel in the brain? This amazing workmanship, — the house in which we live, the cradle in which we sleep, the window through which we see, the chiming bell of every tone of melody, the apt tool of every work of benefit, an architecture that shames all temples, an instrument of infinite uses, and a beauty beyond the stars, — this is to be dissolved. We might well believe in a day of judgment, even from such fit preliminary as spoiling into food for worms this astonishing arrangement and abode of the soul!



INFLUENCE OF THE DEAD. — The dead speak, however brief the term of the mortal career, and even though that career be closed while the moral nature still sleeps in God's own charge. The little child, fading

like a tender plant, has not wholly perished even from the earth. Though it came but to smile and die, yet has it left its influence ; an influence not fleeting, like the shadow of its earthly existence, but long abiding. That gentle image of innocence, that strange power of patience, shall soften your heart, and make it move with tender sympathy to the distresses of your kind, even to the end of your own days. But a peculiar power belongs to those who have been wayfarers upon earth ; who have fought the battle of life, and gained the victory over temptation. Let me bear witness that it is not the living alone who move me ; but the faces of the dead, especially the excellent departed, mingle in the company. I feel ever environed and attended by the ghostly, but living band. Faith and imagination have removed from those faces every vestige of weariness and pain, and have touched their cold, marble hues with the animation of undecaying health. They come not in funereal garments and with the

chill damps of the grave clinging to their forms, but "clothed upon" with robes of light, and that "house which is from heaven." I feel—and do not they feel?—the unbroken cords by which we are still knit together. I seem to be with them; our intercourse renewed or continued; and I gather instruction and take in affection from their presence. They encourage me in my toils; they say to me, "Here is the end of thy griefs;" they warn me against the indulgence of my errors and sins;

"Soft rebukes in blessings ended,
Breathing from their lips of air."

NEED OF THE CONCRETE HISTORIC SUBSTANCE OF CHRIST'S BEING. — So much has been of late monotonously spoken about the spirit of Christ, that it may be feared it has been converted with many into a phrase without meaning, or having only a very vague import. Many seem, indeed, hardly

to know what they themselves understand by it, whether anything definite in the life of Jesus ; or how they should distinguish the language they use from any other general phraseology, such as the spirit of the times, or the genius of civilization ; or what discrimination there is between the spirit of Christ and the plans and progress of this nineteenth century, or how it is differenced from the prevalent feeling in any club or band of friendly associates ; nay, even from any agreeable disposition in an individual breast. Amid this confusion, is it not time to reflect that we cannot perceive or define Christ's spirit, save in and through Christ's body, or the concrete historic substance of his being ; through his person and deportment, his discourses and deeds, his Gospel and church, the baptism he was baptized with, and the cup he drank ? Destroy or lose sight of these, and the spirit flies and escapes our grasp, no more to be embraced by us than a shade ; just as the soul of a man departs when his body is dead, and

only by the manifestations that have been made through it can we know where, or what manner of man, he is.

We thus see, from a special point of view, the value of religion in its institutions and rites, its holy times and places, the Sabbath and the temple, the bowl and the table, as well as in its abstract ideas of truth and its pure suggestions of duty. For these visible and established things are the body in which the invisible glories of the Gospel are held, and by which they are conveyed. The precious odor which is not enclosed is dissipated ; the treasure is liable to loss or plunder, if locked in no casket : so the essence even of piety evaporates, and the riches of immortal value are scattered, when not put into our possession in some solid and abiding shape. Although this fragrance of goodness and this wealth of moral power are to be carried with us whithersoever we go, to adorn human life, to replenish and gladden the whole earth ; yet, to renew the stores we thus bear

through our pilgrimage, must we resort ever afresh to the great fund and divine fountain in the Heaven-ordained and imperishable body of Christ.

Brethren, in our perhaps unthinking talk of the spirit, have we not lost the spirit by overlooking the body? Take an illustration from this pleasant light of day, which since the dawn has been pouring so beautifully around us. It is not only needful there should be in the universe a diffused, general quality of light, but a source, a body of light in the sun, — a fire fed there by ever new fuel laid on by the Almighty hand; and then the bright, unfading gleam will go forth to warm the wide creation, to glance on the remotest orb, and illumine the path of the myriad families of God. But, break that golden urn, trust to any universal radiance that has gone forth, or to any indefinite quality of light lurking here and there, and, after a while, the dancing atoms would all have travelled by; lamp after lamp in the vault

of heaven would turn pale, flicker, and go out ; and over the scene would creep the shadows of darkness, in which every living thing would grope and perish. So, despise the institutions and ordinances of religion, veil in doubt the hand of miracle, with your scepticism unstring the sweet and far-ranging harp of prophecy, with some late free-thinkers make the New Testament a myth or half-fabulous story, confound the Sabbath with the week, empty forth from the broken font the baptismal water, sweep the bread and wine from the board of communion, style what eighteen hundred years ago was written in the Holy Covenant dead letter ; or, to sum up all this destruction in one image, break or desert the bright and glorious urn of the Sun of righteousness, and confide alone in any generalities of wisdom and conceits of philosophy, in any pantheistic speculations or pretended absolute religion, — and how soon would moral darkness cover the earth, and gross darkness the people !

No, we must have Christ's body as well as his spirit. We must have his body that we may have his spirit. His spirit is identified with him, with his person and precepts and institutes. It was not a mere wandering breeze that for a moment played through him, like the air through organ-pipes while a hymn is sung ; but something fixed and living in him, for which we must go to him, which is found incarnate in his life and eloquent on his lips, as our own imagination could never shape or reason infer it. For Christ's religion is an actual as well as an ideal religion, and truly and efficiently ideal because actual. As the fair and grand scenes of nature, when beheld afresh, ever convince us anew that we do not, according to the poetic fancy, create them, but rather that they present a beauty to us up to which our minds must stretch and grow ; so the facts of Christianity give us our types and patterns of moral beauty and spiritual loveliness to make real in our life.

THE INSTITUTIONS OF CHRISTIANITY THE EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY. — The greatest power ever sent by God into time displays itself in an unconquerable and imperishable form. Christ is the Son of God, and Christianity is the body of Christ ; and Christ's body, in its unparalleled greatness and force, is his argument. The phenomenal figure and agency always mark and measure the efficient cause. We need not continually pore among musty records, and unearth old registers. Out-thrust strata, and mountains bubbling up, tell us what is at work beneath. Take the vital and bodily power of anything for a sign of its quality, and sponsor for its birth, as you would the depth and breadth and speed of the river for the great perennial flow of the source you never groped into, or took mathematical measures of, from which it springs. If other depths issue in no streams, refresh no homes, spread from their deposit no fertile fields, and build up on banks, fashioned for their own course, no villages

and towns, nor bear along through the world any freight of human comfort or treasure or hope, then it signifies not to boast their purity, or reason of their profundity. The institutions of Christianity are the evidences of Christianity ; not dead, but living witnesses.

REVERENCE FOR THE BODILY PRESENTMENTS OF CHRISTIANITY.—Christ's body, composed, not of fleshly organs and articulate members, nor of Christian rites only, but also of the living members of his church, his true followers from the day of his call to the fishermen until now ; for our very souls, subtle and invisible, as inspired and trained by him, belong to his body ; — this body, I say, as the means of our edifying and salvation, in all its traits and proportions, claims our respect. Every clear and permanent display of his truth, strength and purity, is part of it. The very walls of this temple, gathering

something of the hoar look of age upon them,—the places here where those sat who were truly joined to him,—the holy service, which has travelled over the globe further than any one foot or single generation of man has gone,—the plate and cup, from which the symbolic bread and wine have been taken into hands and lips now cold and still,—the one sacred day in seven, which has punctually returned ever since the earth, as man's social habitation, was made, through the resurrection of Christ, as a signal of its grandeur, was mighty to change that day's place for the light of his own returning countenance ;—these things, in their measure, grandly compose it. Its maturer cast is seen in the band of devoted men and women, who, in their several positions, regenerating and reforming the race, are faithful to Christ's righteous and benevolent cause. Its younger and more promising look may be beheld in the new generation of children, whom, at home or in the Sunday-school, we in-

struct and lead in the way of Christ's truth and precepts ; and in whom alone, thus informed, this old scarred and sickly world, out of all its chronic sins and invalid decrepitudes, can become whole and new.

If we neglect these things, speak of them scornfully, and treat them lightly, in common but deceptive and irreligious language, styling them mere forms, letting the body of Christ consumptively decay and dwindle among us, — we may talk complacently as we will of the spirit of Christ ; but it is the spirit of the world by which we shall be possessed and moved, and to whose usurpation we shall surrender the throne and lordship of our hearts. The spirit of Christ, which can never be lost absolutely, will yet be lost for us. Absorbing business, engrossing pleasure, political ambition, party power, and private gain, will be the things securing our devotion, in their spirit and their body too. The street and the shop, the hall and the caucus, will be more attractive to us than the house or the wor-

ship of God, or the immortal realities they signify. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, — the evil spirit, all that is meant by the devil, — will have us, and, so far as depends on us, will have our children, the community, and the race. Ignorance and crime, heathenism at home and abroad, it will no more be within our ability to enlighten, reclaim or convert. Mankind will be abandoned to themselves, losing the channel, and so losing the fountain, of the waters of life, and going down, hopeless and uncheered, into the valley and shadow of death. So baleful a consummation may God and our own souls forbid, by uniting us and all alive to the one body, and thus to the one spirit, of Christ !



“THE GATES OF HELL SHALL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST IT.” — Great changes have taken place since Christ ventured that promise to a poor fisherman, and threw out into

the air that challenge against fate. Many old customs have decayed. Whole systems of religion and philosophy have passed away. Famous cities have crumbled in the dust, and wild beasts have roamed and birds of prey screamed over their ruins. Races of men have been dispersed, or are even now, in their last remnants, thinly melting into the grave which this earth has for nations as well as individuals. Yea, shores and seas have begun to shift their places, and everlasting hills have bowed their heads, since Jesus spoke to Peter on these now forlorn coasts of Cesarea. But the gates of hell have not prevailed against his church. It has not only survived unhurt, as the promise implies, but has flourished and increased without decline ; and, under various names, but with open doors, still invites the sons of men, at once to the shelter of its walls, and through the openings of its aisles into paths of endless advancement.

“ARE WE OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST?”

—To help you to consider or solve this question, I have to offer no logical definitions, no curious tests, no rigid articles of any private or sectarian creed of church membership. Be the principles of the decision as large and liberal as our reason, in all its length and breadth, can lay down, or as our freedom, in all the honest extent of its motion, may demand. The soul which, won by the beauty and loveliness of Christ's character, stirred by his purity, and inflamed with the holy fire of his self-sacrifice, flows into cordial agreement with all other trustful souls about it, so likewise attracted and kindled,—the soul that is willing with them to celebrate and carry out its reverence and love for the common Lord in every evangelical and Christian way, according to its fair understanding of his design,—is a member of Christ's real church. In this broad allowance of liberty, there is no license, but a holy sever-

ity greater than in any dogmatic interpretation or ecclesiastic imposition.

THE WAY TO HEAVEN NOT SOLITARY AND UNSYMPATHIZING. — There is among us a tendency to err in regarding our religion simply as a scheme of doctrine and a system of morality, according to which every one is to go and do certain independent works, and offer them to the smile of God's approval; hoping that, in His wise and good decision, He will call them virtue, the one only thing needful, and stamp on them the title of admission to heaven. Ah, my friends! we can go to heaven in no such solitary, unsympathizing way, apart from our kind. Heaven is not a country whose direction the single traveller can find, or a shore the lonely navigator can reach. The strongest are too feeble, and the wisest lack sagacity, for an unaided achievement like that. The very road to heaven lies through one another's hearts.

There is no path beside. The very outset and course we must take is that mutual communion which is hardly less essential either to virtue or joy than our communion with God. So the going to heaven is well represented in the inspirations of sacred poetry as a jubilant march, not a painful plodding, and perchance straggling out of the way.

“ One army of the living God,
To his command we bow ;
Part of the host have crossed the flood,
And part are crossing now.”



MAN'S BEST LIFE ROOTED IN THE AFFECTIONS. — As, we are told, the towering verdure of some great tree, which we admire, is owing to springs of water near by, under its roots ; so all that is grand in character must be nurtured out of those deep and sweet fountains of the affections, of which some men are weak enough to be ashamed, though they are both manhood's

and womanhood's glory, as they are both the gladness and the purification of the world. The virtue that depends alone on the will and weak purpose of human ability is apt to grow dry and remain slender, like stalks in the fall of the year, mid the meagre supplies of an arid and sandy soil, and, beneath great pressure of the wind and flood of temptation, to be uprooted, or break helplessly and fatally down, and be borne perishing miserably away.

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST. — It has been with some a word of scoffing and reproach. It has had its ages of partial corruption and apparent decline. It has contracted occasional unavoidable stains in travelling through this violent and bloody world. Hypocrisy has sometimes nestled at its altar, and honesty refused to go in at its door. But, under an open-eyed, unwinking survey of all its character and history, it still stands forth the noblest society ever

formed on earth. No human association dares provoke comparison with it, for the generosity of its spirit, or the magnitude and multitude of its benefits. Over this warring and licentious globe, it has trod, as a holy phalanx, for eighteen centuries ; and, in the worst times, shed some healing and refining influence on the human mind. Low as the world may have sunk, it has never been utterly dragged down with, but always been above, the world, and raised the world above itself. By no other band or fellowship, by no tribe or people, or princely line, in whatever is great and deserving, has it been equalled. It has transferred from itself to the very enclosures in which it has assembled an honor without parallel in any other structures in the world.

THE HEAVENLY STATE. — Two ideas, of future advance as of present improvement, struggle together in the same, or are op-

posed to each other by different minds. The first idea is of individual growth and development forever ; the second is of an unfolding in fellowship of social sympathy and power. The first idea certainly has its grandeur. The single mind, studying by itself the works and ways of the Creator, meditating on all their beauty and wisdom, till lyric strains of holy rapture and blessed thanks burst from its conscious depths ; then, soaring ever to new heights for the thrilling pleasures of private discovery, and flying into the far profound of the universe, furnished with wings to beat secure its lonely way along the coasts of all the attractions of space, and return laden with its own riches to its ever larger hive, and even, in its immense expansion of strength and knowledge, to become almost a companion for God himself, or to converse only, like a prince of intellect and science on earth, with some rare equal in genius and attainment,—this idea of the heavenly futurity is lofty, and doubtless, to some,

may have a peculiar charm. But, truer to the divine word and to the human heart is the other idea, which represents heaven, not as a hermitage, but as a house ; and its inhabitants, not as independent occupants, but as a company united in all affectionate intercourse, dwelling in the brotherly and sisterly amity which cherubim and seraphim symbolize ; or going forth happy, harmonious bands in their wayfaring ; or circling in choral troops of praise and gladness, twining their voices, movements and faculties, in a unison which is no constraint, but perfect freedom ; in short, raised to its fulness and accomplished in its refinement a church. As the wild savage or the recluse sage can never here below reach that completeness of human nature which is found in civilized life, so no retirement in heaven could present such opportunity of progress and happiness as will be offered in its upper mansions. The thought which, more perhaps than any other, has haunted philosophy in all ages,

is that of a perfect society. No conception is so transporting as that of the capacity for enjoyment from all that is great and wise and good in a social state. The accomplishment is not here, but there where every good beginning shall be fulfilled.

STRENGTH FROM COMPANIONSHIP. — As the soldier in an army derives half his spirit and courage from his comrades, and loses heart and hope when the ranks are in any way cut off or divided ; as the citizen of a community has a vigor and happiness and inspiration to effort, unknown to the alien or the exile, though of equal native force ; as the laborer works with new zeal and less exhaustion for hearing the sound of a spade or hammer, or the song of others, conspiring at his side, — so the member of Christ's church draws from his companionship an ability finer and more constant, as it is more pure and spiritual, than can flow through martial music, or be wafted

by the banners of an host ; than can be expressed in enterprises of state and achievements of patriotism, or accumulated and kept in motion for all the toil and business of this world. The individual is not absorbed in the church, and does not remain as he was, but is ennobled, warmed with a sacred fire of common enthusiasm, and impelled by new and more urgent motives to the service of God and the salvation of man. The body he belongs to, beyond earthly banding, is a sacramental host, a celestial estate, and a company of laborers together with God. What other relationship could be equal in the honor it confers, the confidence it nourishes, or the duration through which it shall last ?

A JEWISH SYNAGOGUE. — Consider the immense importance, to all the world indeed, of that synagogue. What had kept the saving ideas of a divine original inspiration, flowing a sacred river far back

out of undiscovered sources in a hoar antiquity, from sinking into forgetfulness amid the sandy wastes of time? It was not merely the record of them on paper and stone. That Egyptian paper would crumble; and the tables, soon broken beneath the Mount, be at last reduced to powder. But, as a literary or religious association survives out of the burnt and blackened ruins of the building in which it has met, so, beyond engraving or inscription, a social power redeemed the heavenly instructions and commands from the whelming oblivion. It was meeting together, first in the open air, next in the houses of the prophets, then, for a better accommodation, in the synagogue, planted commonly in some picturesque situation, that appropriated to the bosom of the race the words of its Lawgiver. The life, the spiritual substance of the people, was received and embodied, brought to a head of immediate influence, and conducted in a perennial stream, by the synagogue.

Whence and wherefore, to make our melody with, have we now those sublime psalms, sung, not here and there alone by scattered Israelites, crouching, almost unseen, in Rome and London, in Amsterdam and New York ; but by vast bodies of Christian believers, from the shores washed by the Indian Ocean to the waters of the Pacific Seas? As the great poems and tragedies, now the delight of the world, were composed to be publicly recited or enacted : so they were written, not simply for a solitary harp or a midnight orison, but for the synagogue and the temple. How did that grand doctrine, which is the crown of our rejoicing, of the unity of God, first declared to his chosen people, stand against the tide of polytheism and idolatry, for long thousands of years, till, like the ark across the deluge, it reached safely the time when it should be reëffirmed forever, through all generations, by Jesus Christ? It was clasped to the breast of the nation by this mighty sympathetic power of the

synagogue, and the Sanhedrim or great synagogue, with all the ceremonies and festivals that drew the various tribes of Canaan together. What but this same social energy of affection, giving life to religion after the lapse of fifty centuries, crossed the Atlantic, and, at the diameter of the earth distant from its first seat, has summoned together among us the scanty members of a nation still vital and indissoluble ; while the roving, disconnected savages, that once possessed this whole continent, are almost without an epitaph fading away ? Truly, the synagogue in a grove of Judea, or by a stream of Galilee, was the parent of synagogues in a world far off, and then unknown !

We may be proud of our modern inventions and discoveries. We may boast our art and science. We may tell what we can do with our press and compass, with our looms and engines, with our iron rail and electric wire. Nevertheless, those old Hebrews, now vagabond and scorned, are our


spiritual progenitors. In the name of God, they claim our filial debt of religious gratitude. Though now, like thin hordes of Arabs in the desert, they wander in fancy through the magnificent space of their ancient history, we, and all the dwellers in Christendom, walk with them over a common ground of annals, unequalled odes, and exalted prophecies. We are inextricably united with them, for time and eternity, though so broadly separated, too, by the new instructions of a greater Teacher than they ever acknowledged. Truly the by-word and hissing for the Jew has been carried further than has been good for the Christian. They can teach us that the social power by which, through the synagogue, they have so widely inoculated mankind with their sublime persuasions of the oneness and justice of God, must be more firmly relied on, and more vigorously wielded, to instil the additional lessons of our divine Master.

THE LORD'S TABLE. — It was a plain meal, — the last supper of a friend with the friends he was about to leave. Artists and men of imagination have since described it magnificently. The Lord's table has been by them amply raised and extended, or curiously carved and adorned. The room it stood in has been expanded, with polished pillars, into the similitude of a palace ; and windows have been opened from it through a bland summer air far into beautiful prospects. By yellow gold and pale shining silver, mixed with sparkling gems, in soft engravings and costly paintings, with rich substances of solid grain, wood or ivory, the Lord's table has been represented. After such patterns, indeed, it has actually been made, under royal roofs furnished, and in splendid chapels preciously decorated and served. But the place where it was first laid was only a poor upper chamber ; a spare room yielded for that purpose, because required for no other, for a sad band, soon to be scattered.

Common household utensils held the bread and wine, with the loaf and bitter herbs of which they partook ; while all about them, as they reclined, was as homely as in any assembly of Israelites in the lowliest dwelling of poverty. Yet this only magnifies the heavenly power with which that wonderful being, who was head and master of the feast, has, through the ordinance which the touch of his finger established, reached forth to all the corners of the earth, to make his supper the holiest of traditions, the widest of observances, and most enduring of institutions.

The Lord's table ! Itself made of earthly matter, it is caught up for a vehicle of the love that shall last when it crumbles. In the eyes of all, can it not have dignity and beauty, when, lo ! beyond any imagination of genius, from its little mechanical limit here, it dilates over the earth ; beyond this little hour stands through unreckoned centuries of time, and, in its ascending length, reaches, well provided with innumerable

seats, up to heaven ; while the guests that come to it are not only health and human joy, but pale sickness, that has resigned its last earthly hope ; sorrow from the grave where it has laid its last earthly treasure ; and saintly heroism, persecuted and hard-pushed to nerve itself for some terrible endurance or struggle. The ascended Christ, with his risen followers, meantime pours in light and strength from an invisible presence. As certain companions of a brave man, fallen in battle, refused to consider him dead, but still called his name in the roll ; so those now partaking from the Lord's table know that their comrades, in past time communing with God and Christ, though fallen on earth, are yet alive, and that the name which is above every name among men liveth evermore.



SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE. — In periods when speech is rude and imperfect, a picture-language has been invented, in which certain drawings and colors stand for particular objects, and produce impressions on the mind more vivid than arbitrary characters. In many things, such as the sword borne before the magistrate to signify armed law, the scales of justice, or the figure of the good Samaritan for charity, we use this picture-language still. So the Lord's table, above all the syllables of the dictionary, portrays his feeling. Beyond all the sounds of human lips, it is a hieroglyphic sign, intelligible to all understandings, high or humble, and, without learned interpretation, pathetic to every tribe. The language of one country must be translated for the inhabitants of another. But, to Greek and Roman, to Saxon and Arabian, to the smooth citizen of the town and to the unshorn savage, the Lord's table, the broken bread, which is his broken body, with the flowing wine, which is his

streaming blood, means, and will forever mean, the same.

It is a universal token of love let down from heaven, and a banner of peace moving over all the earth. It has been the purest common bond of kindreds and nations, to link them together below, and lift them up on high. As, from the most ancient times, the table itself, in any human dwelling, has been the signal and centre of human friendship and hospitality, so that those who had eaten and drunk together could not be foes, but, almost as by a divine appeal, the savor of their meat was the cement and pledge of their amity; so those who have sat in sympathy at the Lord's table have taken and imbibed from him a temper better and stronger to unite than all the customs of clans, and all the policies of nations.



MORE IN CHRISTIANITY THAN HAS BEEN WRITTEN. — Many are accustomed to think of Christianity simply as a written covenant. The name calls up to their imagination only a series of books, chapters and verses, in the New Testament. Thank God that we have this printed, infallible and incorruptible memorial of our Lord's life and teachings! Thank God that, when a mass of unauthorized ceremonies and inconsistent pomp was piled on the simplicity of the Gospel, there were those found to raise the cry, "The Bible, the Bible only, the religion of Protestants!" Nevertheless, in this age of words, it is well to remember that the Christianity enjoined by the Bible is in part unwritten; cannot be put into any stroke of the pen, any utterance of the mouth, or pressure of the types. Its inspiration, that sat on its apostles like cloven tongues of fire, flowed, not only into words, but into ordinances, and made them instruments to write it on the tables of the heart, to grave it in the features of the face, to

make it move in more gracious manners, and sound in kindlier tones.

Its outward forms, the buildings it has reared, with solemn gates and halls of praise and prayer, the celebrations it has preserved from Christ himself and his commissioned followers, as well as that best of books it has given to the world, are its record. And, of all the portions of this larger record, while none is more ancient than the Lord's table, none perhaps has poured such renewing energy into the devout and humane dispositions of God's children. It is the loftiest and most venerable in that chain of monuments and historic proofs, that, like a range of mountains, skirts the face of the earth, runs all the way from Christ's visible presence, and is illumined by the days of worship and communion.

MINISTRY OF SICKNESS. — I have seen too much the gracious work that sickness, with all her sharp instrumentalities, does,

to wish to close my eyes on, or pass slightly over, her entries in the book of life. She is the angel who comes not alone and unattended to the body and soul of man. Herself dark, she comes with a bright retinue. Patience, resignation, spiritual thoughts of God and of futurity, come with her. Penitence, flying back over the past, yet the pardoning mercy of the Gospel flying with her, and shedding rays of heaven on her mournful way ; resolution, pluming herself for a better course ; good affections to the Father above, and the brethren around, often unfolding more strong and tender than they had ever done before in health ; — these are the attendant spirits and close companions of sickness, to whose presence and precious agency we can all testify. And so this page of our record shall be to us no page of fell chance or dark misfortune, but written with the finger of God, not in the train of outward circumstances merely, but for enduring instruction, on the tables of the heart. For, as the most

blazing effulgence of heaven sleeps within the black cloud, so in this lowering darkness and eclipse of bodily suffering often lies the very brilliance of a spiritual and divine glory.

THE BURDEN OF DEATH LIFTED UP. —
How take off the burden of sadness that settles down on a bereavement by death? God, my friends, by his son Jesus Christ, lifts up even this burden. He lifts it up in the assurance that they are not dead, though their mortal frames are dissolved; that they are not silent, though by our dull ears their voices are unheard. They praise him still, though not in the faint tones of this our humble worship. Their virtues live and grow, still sacred in his care, though canonized in no human calendar. Nay, they are not only themselves immortal, but they keep alive, or create, the faith and sense of immortality in our hearts. They have made a path with their

feet into the blessed land ; they have filled up and bridged over with their hallowed dust the separating gulf from time into eternity.

THE INFLUENCE THAT GOES OUT FROM GOODNESS.—I think every disciple of Christ, who has sensibility, feels a little ashamed when he hears of any startling crime or moral disgrace occurring near him. For he feels that, if he and his companions were what they should be, and acted on their fellow-creatures as they should act, the neighborhood and the community would be lifted above such conduct. Yes, an influence goes out from pre-eminent goodness that cannot be altogether resisted, and never dies, but works on immortal in the earth, even after its translation to the heavens. I passed by the spot where one of the truly excellent of God's children had lived, and saw that they had levelled the old mansion to the ground ;

but that departed Christian soul was as near to me and moved me as though I had expected her wonted greeting at the door.

THE HUMBLING DOCTRINE CONCERNING THE NATURE OF MAN. — I have contended for the essential dignity of human nature. But is it a doctrine of pride that I have attempted to establish? Will you exult and take great credit that so glorious a constitution is yours? O, no! it is a doctrine of profound humility to us all. It is a doctrine of bitter shame and confusion of face to how many of us! The doctrine of total depravity, I know, is called one of the humbling doctrines of revelation. But no doctrine can be more fitted to inspire a false humility, and a real, though secret arrogance. Why should it not do so? If man's nature is totally depraved, he has nothing to be ashamed of. What should he produce but thorns and thistles, corrupt fruit and bitter waters? What can be

found on a bramble-bush but spines and prickles? The wonder will be if he does not this altogether. If he shows any signs of virtue, any remote glimmerings or twilight beginnings of good' affection, he deserves great commendation. Verily, if he is totally depraved he does remarkably well to have such a proportion of truth and justice and amiableness in his words and dealings, and may plume himself on his extraordinary success with such bad means and so unpromising an undertaking. If he be a worm, as in sermons and prayers he is sometimes called, his proper business is to grovel ; and it is miraculous that he can have dreamed of soaring to be an angel.

But, if he has a noble nature, if God's high chancellor of reason is in his mind, and God's vicerent of conscience in his moral being, and an image of the divine benignity in every tender sentiment of his heart, then may he well hang down his head, and blush from his soul that he has

fallen so short, and done so unworthily. Then may he be indeed a publican, and cry, "Unclean ! unclean ! God be merciful to me a sinner !" Then may he tremble at the catalogue of heathen or Christian vices that runs over the page of the Old or the New Testament. Then may he beg of God pardon for the giant cruelty that breaks forth in unjust war or avaricious slavery. Then may he put his hand on his mouth and his mouth in the dust, for the corrupting tide of intemperance he has let flow over all his noble capabilities ; and cast a thicker veil of self-abasement over his countenance, as he remembers the thousand petty meannesses of which he is guilty. Then sackcloth and ashes for my disgraceful enmities and low indulgences !

CONVICTION OF SIN TO BE ACCOMPANIED BY CONVICTION OF GOODNESS. —The conviction of sin is thought by many to be the grand basis of all spiritual edification.


That it is a necessary element in the foundation of character, one pillar, if not the corner-stone, of the building, cannot be fairly denied. But this solid support is to be found in a conviction of actual, not of a fancied natural, sin ; while a conviction, not only of the sin in our heart, but of the goodness, too, which there solicits us, is requisite to any lofty endeavor or achievement. The moral evil of our own soul, as well as the injurious evil inflicted by our fellow-men, we can overcome only with good. Jesus said to his disciples that the spirit he should send would "reprove, or convict, the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." Wonderful instance of his penetrating wisdom, of his divine inspiration, that he would have men convicted, not only of wrong doing, but of holiness too ! It is not sufficient for God's purpose respecting us that we should be repelled from iniquity, but that we should moreover be kindled with the generous flame of excellence, being baptized "with the Holy Ghost

and with fire." While we come to spurn at vice, to take the distance of disgust, and be removed from it by the power of repentance, something lofty and magnanimous, positively pure and worthy, must as it were descend from heaven to lay hold of, inspire and lift us. As the lives of the bad do not so greatly bless us as the examples of the good, so dwelling even upon our own faults and mistakes is not so profitable as to contemplate, and become vitally possessed with, wisdom and virtue. If only the "unclean" demon is expelled, "seven other more wicked spirits" will take up their abode in the empty house whence he is gone out. But give occupation and lodgment in the breast to the Holy Spirit, and, though the evil temper have been as a strong man armed, a stronger than he shall take from him "all his armor," and "keep his palace."

PRESUMPTION OF THE PROPHECY OF UNIVERSAL SALVATION. —The inquiry, whether a happy fate will finally embrace every creature, and there be literally no sin or suffering in all God's universe, seems not within our power clearly to solve. We know not the origin of evil ; we know not its end ; we cannot measure the purposes which, under God, it may subserve ; we understand not how extensively through the creation his training of erring and peccable natures is used, or how many souls of his inspiration must pass through stages of weakness and folly before attaining to wisdom and moral strength. To make any definite prophecy of the time when his plans shall be accomplished is a greater presumption than to predict the end of the world. Indeed, will his plans ever be accomplished ?



THE NEED OF CONVERSION NO PROOF OF TOTAL DEPRAVITY.—The great majority need to be changed. And we should not feel sadly, as though this necessity were some hard thing, pointing to the degradation and depravity of our nature. It is rather a great privilege and a blessing of God *in* our nature that it can repent ; that it is not like many material things ; not like a leaning, crumbling edifice, which, when it has once begun, must continue to lean and crumble till it falls ; not like a decaying plant, which must go on decaying till it dies ; not like a diseased body, driven on in disease to utter dissolution ;—not like these things, but, by God's mercy, it can recover itself, become erect and healthy : and, like the angels, as Milton describes them, “ vital in every part, cannot but by annihilating die.”



ONE OFFICE OF THE CHRISTIAN MIRACLES. — The Christian miracles perform the office of guarding the doctrine and morality of the Gospel. Much scorn has been expressed at the idea of proving truth by any displays of power. Spiritual things, it is said, must be seen in their own light, and cannot be cleared up by material phenomena. The Christian advocate, however, does not suppose it is the design of the miracles to show the intrinsic credibleness or lay bare the ultimate basis of any intellectual propositions, but to seal and certify their origin. They do not so much establish the truth as defend it ; and, like sentinels posted at a treasure-house, protect all the teachings and precepts with which they are connected. They repel the attacks of human speculation, coming without heavenly warrant ; like vehicles of celestial make and strength, they carry all that the divine Instructor said along with them through the course of ages, suffering nothing to be lost from their strong and holy girdle ;

and, while with their sacred charge they marvellously move over the earth and down the track of time, they seem, as from a spirit's tongue, ever echoing forth the declaration, — He that affirmed these principles, and enjoined these commands, had the witness of the Most High with him ; the name of God is written on the instrument by which he conveys this wealth of knowledge ; returning health and sense and reason are the strong and blessed tokens of his agency ; and the image of a broken sepulchre is stamped in the seal of his signature.

AN INDIVIDUAL IMMORTALITY ASSURED BY THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST. — There is a general kind of immortality of truth and goodness, of which men sometimes speak, with no idea of an individual survival of the grave. It is an immortality in the future like that in the past ; an immortality in which the drop of our existence —

which has been for a moment insulated for such achievements of honor and promise — sinks back to the sea from which it rose ; and we ourselves, after we are dead, subside to the condition we were in before we were born, — that unconscious state which David speaks of, when God saw his “unperfect substance.” Such an immortality, for the human creature so unreal, has not seldom been represented in the speculations of those who cannot quite conceive that spiritual qualities should perish, or find their house in the grave ; and yet have no distinct belief that those in whom these qualities have for a passing moment been incarnated and enshrined shall ever transcend the floods of time, and plant their feet on the shores of eternity. But the immortality which Christ, by his resurrection, brings to light, is an actual immortality, which, in enjoyment, memory, self-possession, noble effort, and endless progress, God’s faithful children shall have in themselves, and of which they shall be for-

ever sensible. Coming back the same, in character and appearance, that he was before he went, Jesus proved he was not lost in the vagueness and void of the spiritual world, but could come and go, cross and re-cross the stream, stoop under the arch of the grave, and still keep all that made him himself. This case of his own he applies to his followers. He ties their individual fate to his heavenly fortunes. Those prints of the nails, which he asked Thomas to verify, were not only the sign of his imperishable identity, but the demonstration of our own. To continue the same conscious being and will, this alone is immortality.

THE PILOT'S ORDERS. — Amid the uncertainties and continually-hazardous liabilities of an ever-precarious and short-lived existence, the thought of what may be real in a future state ever haunts us. Our doom stands in a winning, yet, to our con-

science, fearful glory before us. Ignorant how soon the voyage which we are on shall end, we can scarce fail, from our most busy entanglement, to cast our glance sometimes onward, peering over the horizon of this world. Well indeed is life, in our common speech, described as an ocean. All sudden perils and remediless disasters, as of the sea, are in our path. At any time, the fierce gusts may rise, and drive us to some pitiless fate. In any hour, the lantern of our own wisdom may be quenched in blinding spray from the surges of conflicting human opinions, or the vapors of doubt may obscure our course. On the rocking billows, with the foundations of our bark ever trembling beneath us, shall we not hail the lamp of life shining out of the monument of our Lord's resurrection, and casting steady lustre from the further coast of his heavenly ascension? As, when the waves are up, and the rain descends, and the winds blow and beat, the orders of the pilot, who can guide through the storm and

night, are more precious and important than all the strength and wealth and wisdom of the world, so is it with the directions of him who marks the way to eternal life over the great bewildering deep of our present so agitated and mysterious being. Through all the jeopardies of our mortal career, let us obey and follow our great Master, the Captain of our salvation ; and, exulting even in gloom and tribulation, steer to that haven of rescue and firm ground of boundless advancement which he has revealed.

“THEY ALSO SERVE WHO WAIT.” — I go to see the child with lame and feeble feet, keeping her seat while the sun rises, describes his slow circle, and goes down ; and, out of her pallid face and serene eyes, she smiles a smile of fortitude, till, in my own debt for courage and serenity, I know her situation is not providentially in vain for others or herself. For God has two

handles by which he draws to him the vessel of his creature's spirit. The outer handle is pleasure, but the inner one is pain. And he makes even such a little one, under his handling, a missionary of his Gospel, though she be held in the confinement of a few feet's space, — a missionary as truly as he does him who sails over every sea, and travels through every land, with the errand of glad tidings, peace on earth, and good-will to men. I visit the paralytic sufferer ; and, through his lips, as I stand by his side, flow the old hymns and long-wonted prayers, more affecting in the word that palsy makes difficult or renders indistinct.

TWO PROPHECIES OF A FUTURE LIFE. —
There are two things that predict and make necessary a future life. One is a sweet, perfect, saintly soul, going in faith through all suffering and opposition, and rising, above funereal sobs and lamentations, to

clear, rich songs of thanks and praise ; blessing God for his earth, and ripe for his heaven ; streams of mercy flowing by its side, “eternal sunshine settling on its head ;” — and the other is the struggling and unsuccessful navigator of this lower ocean, encountering the gale, having to put back from the course, or wrecked at last on the rocks and sands of misfortune. O, for that one, too, another bark must be provided to sail through other more pacific seas, with new opportunities and fresh chances for virtue and happiness in the unlimited universe of God.




DEATH A SLEEP. — Men have often spoken of death as a sleep, without holding to, but utterly losing, the meaning of this identity. Infidels and atheists have described death as an eternal sleep, absurdly thus violating the very metaphor they used ; it not being the nature of sleep, that divine benediction on our fatigue and distress, to be eternal.

Sleep is not annihilation ; so death is not annihilation. Sleep is a recreation of our energies, a renewal of our affections, the strengthening and sharpening of every ability for firmer service. Sleep is returning for a while from self-possession into the immediate hand of God, and mysterious contact with his regenerating life, for a new influx, from the Fountain of being, into the very depths of our existence, of freshness and alacrity and force.

FEAR OF DEATH. — May I say, that one of my earliest childish recollections was the fear, not of death, but of sleep. I remember lying upon my bed resisting, and, in a kind of horror of the imagination, struggling against this then unwelcome phantom of sleep. The thought seemed to be of resigning consciousness and existence ; in fact, of dying in all the sense that can be had of death. But that, which appeared terrible, came not malignant, but benign

and gracious to close the eyes, and not extinguish but resuscitate the ignorant, worn-out creature for new sport and study. So the death, of which we are afraid, can lay no ban upon us. The unsubstantial ghost is nothing but in the benefaction it brings, the new gloss it shall put on our faculties, the keener edge on our desires, the greater alertness and pitch of a higher flight to our undying aspirations ; as the winged creature, that has slept on the bough, more gladly scales and beats at dawn through the heavens.



THE COMPANY OF THE DEPARTED. — While into the arms of death have sunk such a host of those honorable and dear to us — friends and kindred of earlier years ; of those who played with us by the fireside, whose looks beamed and voices rang happily, the companions in part of our journey ; of our guardians in the slippery ways of youth, or of those whom we, in

our turn, have tended and led by the hand, hoping they would take, and more than make good, our place ; and, meantime, as the frail members of surviving parents or children, all whose lines and features are so fondly written in the page of our eye and the book of the heart, lie open to manifold danger, — pain besieging them, fever and consumption lurking round, — in this condition to be able to say that the arms of death are but the arms of sleep, and to sing,

“ Asleep in Jesus ! peaceful rest,
Whose waking is supremely blest ! ”

O, it spreads comfort alike through the enclosures of the dead and the abodes of the living. It lifts the pall ; rends the shroud ; rolls away the great stone ; renders soft the dying bed ; makes marble and granite, planted in the ground, point up ; brands broken columns and inverted torches as misrepresenting the dead ; and

shows the heavy Egyptian sepulchre to be out of place in a Christian burial-ground.

THE SOCIETY OF HEAVEN.—The faculty for social pleasure seems infinite in the nature of man. If one should essay the picture of a perfect state, would he not very likely commence with picking out the choicest companions he had known, those most able to thrill and gladden him with their benignant presence and sparkling wit, with the eloquence and melody of their utterance, and a share of the honey of wisdom from their hived experience? But what description of earthly fact, or what expression of the heart's longing, can equal the reality that awaits God's lowly and obedient ones there? Select a thousand, or ten thousand, excellent, brilliant, refined as you please or can fancy; earnest and affectionate as Paul, loving and spiritual as John, devout as Fenelon, soaring and sublime in imagination and worship

as Milton, humane as Howard and Clarkson, and pure and tender as all the noble women from Mary, the mother of Jesus, down. Then gather them into one city, safely compassed about in a pleasant habitation, to exchange tokens of regard and kind offices of friendship, and to train up young and innocent spirits in accordance with their own high converse; and you have perhaps the grandest portraiture of paradise that heart could wish. Yet you only try for, and fall short of, that real New Jerusalem, where meet the saints of all ages, with Christ himself, no longer an invisible spirit, but a personal form, a recognizable countenance and person, at their head.

A CROWN OF GLORY ON THE HEAD OF DEATH. — Surely, it is not despising this life to celebrate the good and wise designs of God in death. Life at all, the sense of existence, in this material world, only

breathing the sweet air, seeing the pure light, and beholding around God's happy creatures, is a ground of unspeakable gratitude. This body, with its motions and senses, is a marvellous instrument to express and to feed the soul. We might well choose to live for the sake of living in such a scene ; like a child, with his ecstasy amid the birds and bees and blossoms of spring ; or a man, on some bright morning that shows him the world has not, with his rolling years and changing life, altered or grown old, — remembering and feeling, as though he had become a little one again, his childhood's ecstasy. But, when the decrepitude of years sinks into the frame, or early disease and infirmity seize it ; when the eye grows dim, and the ear deaf, to earthly sights and sounds of beauty and comfort, — O, then is there not far more to die than to live for ? To live in the body is, then, for sickness and suffering ; but to die, for a new spiritual body to mount up like eagles. O, how grateful I

often think the departed spirit must be for this very thing to have been permitted by God to lay aside forever "this frail and weary weed of mortality;" this load of clay, that has dragged it down to the bed of languishing, for that other body in which it shall run and not be weary, and walk and not faint!

God, therefore, has not sent life for a blessing, and death for a curse; life for smiles, and death for bitter tears; life for bright robes and garlands, and death only for the black and heavy pall. If we knew both privileges, according to the real rank which they should hold in our minds, while grateful for this life, we should yet more magnify death. We should somewhat disrobe the glory of this terrestrial state, and go to put crown and laurel on his head, till the king of terrors were clothed magnificently, and his dark ante-chamber more inviting than the courts of a palace. The last enemy would smile upon us as a friend. Joy would fly from

many of her boasted haunts, to hover with grief over the grave ; and we should feel that, if we have much to live for, we have incomparably more to die for.

THE SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM. — Being lately in a region distant from any church, I went, one bright Sabbath morning, to the top of a hill, to see the works of God, and listen to religious reading. As I sat on a lonely hillock, that offered itself near by, the beauty and mystery of the world took hold of me. The strange life of man, and his questionable fate, added their doubtful complexion to the living splendors of the day, and mixed with my delicious enjoyment a dull pain. My mind ran off to mystic absorption in the everlasting magnificent flux of things from pole to pole, — of light and darkness, action or rest ; and somewhat mournfully queried of its own entanglement in this wonderful process, this mysterious texture, so woven

and unravelled, of creation with my own existence. While I reclined in the cooling breeze and the pleasant sunlight, with the wide forest below, and the restless, dashing, moaning ocean filling nearly all the horizon about, an echo through the air, from a far-off tower, took off my attention from all other sights or sounds. It was the toll of a bell summoning the people to worship. It roused me from the deep, imaginative repose amid the forms and hues of all this well-proportioned grandeur around, into which my soul had sunk. Ah! this is the solving of the question; this the divine announcement of a coming existence, beyond this globe and dress of clay! Yea, verily, I could not help exclaiming, well may the bells be rung for the promise, on God's word, of any release for the soul from this infatuating bewilderment in nature, and any path discovered ascending out of her wasting fields and desert sands, into a permanent land of life and happiness! Such disclosure from

heaven should boom out and reverberate over the earth, upon all the winds, to every mortal ear.

LOOKING UP. — You may have felt how it comforts the eye, weary with the surrounding scene of conflict and perplexity, to look up from the turmoil of affairs in the murmuring street, away into the quiet depths and peaceful motions of the ever-serene and untroubled sky. So does it gladden the soul to turn from the disturbing evils which will vex the most favored lot, into that profound and tranquil retreat where, their toils and pains being over, God gathers his true-hearted servants. There they are, above the reach of collision, the power of grief, the grasp of disease, and the sphere of uncertainty. The clouds that were round about God's throne have passed by. His way is no longer in the sea, and his path in the great waters, but his footsteps are now known.

EFFECT OF CHASTISEMENT. — Have you never noticed that the drying-up of springs in the uplands of the pasture sends every creature to some deeper well? So, how often has the failure of common worldly sources of comfort driven the soul to the living Fountain, and the wintry waste of an afflicted existence turned it to the heavenly garner !

WAYS OF DARKNESS IRRADIATED. — The minister of religion — if you will allow the professional reference — walks not in sunny places, but continually among shadows, with grief and disease for his companions, dissolving nature ever near him, and hardly, at any time, able to keep his foot clear from the brink of the grave. Not gay and festive places on the line of time make the vista of his recollection ; but through sick chambers he treads, through rooms solemn with the hush of sympathy, and reverend as temples to the soul with the consecration

of the confined clay ; where no tables of abundance are spread, but spiritual wants take their nutriment. With those that bear their own flesh and blood, he stands at the mouth of the dreamy tomb, and feels the damp from its gloomy space.

Wherefore does not this experience of all that is destructive to mortal strength, and desolating to earthly joy and hope, sink him into a saddened or discouraged man ? Because, through the withering of mortal pleasure and expectation, he sees the waking of the sacred hunger and thirst after righteousness. Through the pining and faded brow and cheek, and the failing of mortal desire, he sees greater beauty of aspiration shine from within than ever hung upon health's freshness and fulness. In faint and dying tones he hears a more inspiring eloquence of the soul panting for God than from the loudest accents. Holy wants, seeking and finding their blessed gratification, reveal a glory, to which all success of gain and reputation

looks inferior and poor. The darkest scenes have often the most cheerful irradiation ; as the clouds catch, and hold in their fleecy folds, the volatile light that would else escape. As there have been those who groped in grave-yards for treasure hidden there, so many have been eternally enriched from the sepulchre. Though it is said the barren sands have commonly been set aside for our burial-ground, richer harvests have been reaped from them, for the food of what is best in our nature, than ever flourished in fertile plain or watered valley. The melting edge of Alpine snows nurtures flowers more delicately beautiful than grow in a rank soil or cultivated garden. So is it in the fall of human life, where dust goes to dust, and ashes to ashes, from whence we pluck the only amaranthine flower of virtue to wear forever.



“WHO WILL GO TO HEAVEN?” — It has been a point of well-nigh boundless and interminable controversy, Who will go to heaven? Many are the sectarian titles and qualifications insisted on. But the answer is simply, Every one who wants to go! — all who “hunger and thirst” for the heavenly society, and who would find their congenial element and their perfect delight in its exalted occupations. The peculiarity of your creed will not carry you to heaven. No, nor the mere custom of a form; nor the respectable superficial morality current, accepted in the street or social circle. Do you want to be righteous? Do you want to go to heaven? Do you love and long for holiness and goodness, and for the company of the holy and the good? Does wealth or honor charm and dazzle you less than the heights you aspire to of communion with God? Is power a less thing to you than uprightness? Has the “seen and temporal” laid no spell on you, binding like that of the “unseen and eternal”?

Does a religious conscience in you suffer no rivalry from interest, and give no way to excess? Then shall you go to heaven ; but no man shall go thither without the want ; no man through the bars set up by his own low desire, or over the bounds of a degraded will.

“OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.”
— Little children brought to Christ, educated in his truth, made to imbibe his spirit, and coming forward, with their innumerable ranks, from every land and clime, with slow procedure which nothing can put back, — they alone shall have power finally and fully to bring in the authority and establish the reign which Jesus Christ came from God in heaven to set up on earth among men.

With solemn joy I hark to the marshalling of this great troop, mightier than all the noisy hosts of the camp and the bloody plain. Their tread, far off and near by,

grows year by year wider and more audible. Their van is in the midst of us. Parents and teachers are divinely appointed to the lead of the vast company. Tyrants and oppressors, all sinners and corrupters of human virtue, tremble at their coming. At the trumpet blown by their youthful voices, the walls of every evil institution shall fall down. Quiet, and without violence, as the light of the morning, is their advance ; but powerful, all-pervading and creative, as the sun in heaven, their influence. I see them banding, I hear them approaching, as the very kingdom of heaven. Those old words of our text ring out more arousing than any clarion upon my ear. From the little audience gathered on that further side of Jordan, they come as melody softly loud to the great Captain's host, but, like the music in a march of attack, dreadful to his foes. The gentle voice of him who first uttered them, mustering those that fight with no carnal weapons, waxes into a call with which the martial instru-

ments of all nations cannot vie. The Commander's speech passes down to every one in the conduct under him, till it reaches the youngest follower in all his ranks. At the pervading sound a decisive movement runs through the whole array advancing together. No reeling step is seen, no clanking chain or scourging whip is heard. Only forward to the victories of peace and love, the children of a new-born race, a noble army, go. God speed them ! and God help us to speed them on their way !

“NOT DISOBEDIENT TO THE HEAVENLY VISION.”—I believe there is no moral evil of which we so need to be purged as this inequality or contradiction between our principles and our deeds ; or, rather, this is the very root and essence of all sin. Unless asleep under the blaze of Christian light, we have visions enough. What explanation so common in every mouth as this, “It is beautiful !” — that expression

or image of excellence and benignity in nature, art, landscape, painting, song, book, speech, "O, it is beautiful!" Yes; but do you obey its beauty, or allow it to be beauty all outside of you, a mere vision and meteor of the air? What is the abstraction of beauty or excellence worth, if it is not incorporated into your soul, incarnated in your life? It is worth as much as the gold of California was when hid deep in the mine, with the rock binding it, and the river flowing over it, and the forest towering above it, — generation after generation passing by it, all unsuspected and vain. But, let the abstract idea be worked out and extended from its lurking-place through your conduct, and it will be like the ore and sand changed into the currency of the nation, bearing enormous business, and inestimable wealth, and endless comfort, on the bosom of its boundless stream.

There is great, and, more specially it must be said, very wilful guilt in having the vision and not fulfilling it. For this

vision never stands as a mere picture in the imagination, as if God were pleasing us with a dumb show from heaven ; but, as in Paul's case, is always accompanied with a command. It has a lifted finger in it, a voice to beckon or urge, " Do this ! " or, " Forbear that ! " It is not many different visions that we have of spiritual things, chaotically changing like the sparklings in a kaleidoscope, but a few high and glorious visions often renewed ; as though, by their endless repetition, God said they ought to occupy our efforts all our days. While we sing to God our hymn,

" I 've seen thy glory and thy power
Through all thy temple shine ;
My God, repeat that heavenly hour,
That vision so divine ! "

after concluding our song, we are not to sit down content with the luxury of the vision, to think we are to do nothing but eat this fairy food of fancy, and take our tears for our title to heaven, so sweet and delicious

sometimes is our weeping ; but to rise and go forth to accomplish what we see and admire.

So did the author of our text. Paul's vision cost him something. He had more to do than paint it, brilliant as a work of Raphael or Michael Angelo, in that famous oration of his to Agrippa. He had to walk, in obedience to it, like a servant after his master, through Judea, and to go into Arabia; and sail over the Mediterranean Sea, and traverse barbarous lands, and be in perils of robbers, and fight with wild beasts at Ephesus, not safe among his own countrymen, in chains at Rome, all from that vision ! as he courageously preached, and grandly exemplified his preaching ; never refusing for himself more than all the labor and suffering which he enjoined upon others. He had visions indeed ! Sometimes he knew not whether he was in the body or out of the body ; he was caught up to the third heaven, heard unspeakable words ; was in a trance in the temple ; but

his visions were no dim, unsubstantial, transitory spectres of midnight ghastliness. He drew them down from the heavens to the earth, as the old sage did philosophy. He made them, like living, noble-spirited creatures, work in the toil of life for the glory of God and the salvation of men. He never was a dreamer, without being a doer of his dreams. He counted it foolish even to narrate or enumerate his visions in words, instead of putting them into deeds. What he saw, on the road to Damascus, of the great Lord and Master, we read, made him blind to surrounding things in the world ; and if, without the supernatural wonder, we have the same vision of all that is holy and divine in Jesus, we shall be voluntarily a little blind to what is commonly brightest and most dazzling in the eyes of men on earth.

OFFICE OF HISTORIC AND RITUAL CHRISTIANITY. — As the electric wire is valuable for the earthly communications which it brings, which no other channel could seasonably to the pressing need convey, so the historic and actual matter of Christianity is unspeakably precious for the messages from heaven which it carries to the relief and assurance of the human heart, and which, in the breaking of its line, would be interrupted, and might never come to yield their glad tidings. Yet, to stop with the ritual, and to worship the ordinances, is like amusing one's self with the play of the magnets yonder, instead of heeding their commands ; or like idolizing the face of a friend, without ever entering into his soul. It is a singular fact that our memory holds in a less distinct material measure the countenance of those dearest to us than it does that of comparative strangers, because, I suppose, the mind comes at length to penetrate to and rest on the idea and sentiment beneath. So, in proportion as

we reach to the significance of the ritual, though only prizing it all the more for what it conducts, we shall stand less by any rigid mode of its construction.

ALL DISCOVERY IS A DISCOVERY OF THE GOODNESS OF GOD. — It is a fact of singular and transcendent beauty, that all discovery, through all history, in all the world, has been but the gradual and ever cumulative discovery of the goodness of God. At first, on the rough and stormy earth, where so much seemed adverse to human comfort, the fancy naturally rose in men's minds, of hostile as well as friendly divinities, of rival kingdoms of good and evil, of some malignity of a personal Satan, or essential evil of matter. But, lo ! marvellously, all invention, all progressive insight, has been of the kindness of the one Maker and Ruler. Every upturned layer of the earth discloses the amount of happy life he has been continually form-

ing. The most fiery and irresistible elements illustrate their Author's love, originally infused into them, in becoming man's mighty servants, to confer countless inestimable benefits of intercourse and improvement. Sharp, corroding fluids yield an ether that laps distress in oblivion, or changes it from dreadful torture to a happy dream ; and poisons themselves are transmuted into medicines more precious than gold and gems, once alone prized, from the same subterranean mines. The gulfs and precipices, once thought to demonstrate and lay bare the divine displeasure, prove to be but revelations of creative benignity. Man's discovery is no discovery of aught malign in the creation, but a continual reduction of the domain of evil, promising to bring it at last, in the perception of nature and unfolding of the soul, to the point of sheer nothingness and utter extinction.

Verily, if there be that vast hell of omnipotent vengeance which has been so

long and vehemently pretended, in none of our researches into this fair and glorious universe have we found the door. We have, in no astronomic journeyings of our mind, reached the entrance, nor dug down to the springs of mischief and divine hate beneath. As the dark, repulsive hue in which the Chinese, on their maps of the globe, used to paint all save their own celestial empire, has fled before the light of knowledge, so that local hell, which has been made the hemisphere of God's creation, is vanishing away. Night itself, which seems to divide the dominion of the universe with day, turns out to be but a little shadowy cone, revolving round each globe to wrap its inhabitants in needful and merciful slumber ; while the vast universe is full of light, presenting but a material emblem of the immense goodness of God.



GROUND OF OUR RIGHT AND FITNESS TO EAT THE LORD'S SUPPER. — Do we love Jesus Christ? Does our heart flow to him as the chief among ten thousand? and is he the one, altogether lovely, we have wanted to fill our soul? The desire of all nations, do we find him also the only perfect satisfaction ever embodied for even a single and solitary heart? When made known to us, does he take in us the place of honor and principal regard, which to him, of all that ever breathed, belongs? Does this prince sit with his Father, king on the inner throne, while all usurpers of the sceptre retire? Then, indeed, is there a place for us at his table. Our right is there. No man, no banded ecclesiastic sway, no sectarian or papal excommunication, can dispossess us of our seat. The absolute Disposer assigns it. Virtually, potentially, it is ours, whether in actual allowance or not. Ours, at least, shall be a place at the table, now but in vision, which is above! Eating the supper is the

sign of our love, as sacred in the thoughts of the Most High as it is blessed to our own souls. But, if we have no such emotion ; if our being is not thus sensitive to the excellency and beauty of Jesus ; if he does not stir our wish and emulation with all that is heavenly, and for all that is humane in his character and life, then, whatever we may do, or outwardly appear to do, we do not eat his supper. We perform only a feigned and hollow service.

COMMUNION WITH CHRIST AT HIS TABLE
A PRACTICAL EXERCISE. — Eating the Lord's Supper, while it may seem merely formal, is of all things most practical. It does not end as an exhibition or ceremony. It nerves to toil, endurance, and sacrifice, for the sake of God and humanity. It has been the spring of a thousand currents of philanthropy and holy zeal, in all directions crossing the earth, and bearing more benefit than its rivers and streams. It has

lighted and borne on the torch for every forlorn hope of the world. It has prompted numberless offerings of benevolence. No barren tree has it been, taking root here in the earthly vineyard only to cumber the ground ; no fountain long since strangled, nor ancient channel now dry and stony ; no obsolete form, quenched fire, or monotony of unmeaning words ; but, like a living figure travelling down from remote antiquity, it still moves and acts and inspires the souls of men. Whoever, in a conceit of superior wisdom, may neglect or oppose it, it will not be destroyed, or become disused ; but, with its associations and suggestions, will continue, the clearest material medium, held out in this lower air, of the human and divine, to blend invisible spirits together, and fulfil precious offices of consoling sorrow and urging to fidelity. It is indeed an embodiment of the peculiar character of our religion, as distinguished from other religions, in not being a system of abstract doctrines and

precepts, that can be put into words ; but the life of a divine person, in vital communication with his votaries. In this characteristic is the everlasting strength and success of the Gospel.

“THIS CHILD IS SET FOR THE FALL AND RISING AGAIN OF MANY.” — Precisely so it was. Priest and high priest, with knife and sacrifice, with robe and censer, fell from their high estate before the growth of that child. Levites, in all their numerous ranks, that opened and guarded the temple door, sang in the temple service, or gave their official dignity to the thirty-five sacred cities they inhabited, fell from their universal command of the minds and consciences of their countrymen. Pharisees, with their affectation of holiness, and Sadducees, in their conceit of wisdom and pride of unbelief, fell from their aristocracy of position before the child whom they would scorn and persecute and crucify. While these

many fell, to make good both parts of the prophecy, other many rose. Mean fishermen, from their nets on the sea and shore of Galilee ; and despised publicans, from their tax-gathering tables ; common men, servile in Judea or plebeian at Rome, rose into ability and influence. Simple women, too, who had desired only to sit at their lords' and teachers' feet, rose into the purest fame, and had their names enshrined on the tablets of the highest history, to be read thankfully in enduring glory, long as the world should stand ; while Pilate and Herod, and Annas and Caiaphas, and Festus and Felix, — ay, and Cæsar himself, save only in that imperial title common to all the rulers of the earth's mistress, — fell, and went down forever.

The old ideas, in short, with those who clung to them, fell ; the new ideas, with their advocates, rose, gained a footing, and multiplied adherents. They inoculated the best of the Hebrew blood itself into their transmission. They ran through tribes and

nations with their persuasive eloquence. They wrote their meaning on the fresh mind of the age, clearer than the letters on Hebrew parchments and phylacteries. They cut their rules in the heart, deeper than the laws of Rome on her brazen tables. Indeed, the old Rome and the old Jerusalem fell ; and a new Rome and a new Jerusalem, of religion and law, arose as from under ground, out of the dust of the ancient decay, turning tombs into a resurrection. The ideas, once represented by a poor man, who had not so much as the fox's hole or the bird's nest where to lay his head, at length clothed themselves with authority, sat down on the throne of nations, to survive a thousand dynasties,—truly, some sign of an accomplishing of trembling Simeon's scarce-regarded prophecy, when the child was taken from Mary's tender hands into his wasted arms for a blessing !

But the ideas that fell, and the ideas that rose, did not fall or rise as mere abstrac-

tions. Christ's new principles were not points of sight in some philosopher's eye, making by their splendor a temporary stir, but having little hold on the general feeling of humanity, and no power to change the thought or practice of the race. Pure ideas the perception of most men is too gross to appreciate. So, in the wisdom of God, Christ expressed his ideas in institutions. Thus, again, some institutions fell, and others rose, through the agency of that child, born in Bethlehem, and carried up to the capital of the land for circumcision. Yes, for all his followers the bloody rite itself, which he suffered, fell ; and instead thereof rose the beautiful symbol of baptism by water, putting its soft, gracious drops for that sharp and angry edge. The bitter herbs fell from the table of the passover, and the board of communion rose, crowned with nourishing bread and strengthening wine. The Israelitish ritual fell, with the temple where it was celebrated ; but finer emblems of Heaven's goodness and man's


cleansing from sin arose. The narrow synagogue, with its hard prejudices and severe exclusions, fell ; the Christian church, with open doors and generous invitations of all into her shepherd's fold, arose. Pagan temples, idolatrous groves, chambers of vile imagery, altars of animal and human sacrifice, shrines of base and evil passions, refuges of lies, habitations of cruelty, with many a high place of lust and monument of strife, fell ; while institutions of philanthropy, asylums for the poor and weak and aged, hospitals for the sick and insane, for the blind and deaf and dumb, retreats for the unfortunate, the sinful, and to human view ruined,—things absolutely undreamed of before Christ, in Egypt or Assyria,—arose.

But, beneath this ample outward theatre of sinking and ascending shapes and figures with which he, beyond any other, has marvellously crowded the stage of time, is that private human heart which shall survive all thrones and dominions, principalities

and powers, and which is forever the field and test of the highest power. In that, how much has Christ made to fall and to rise! How much fear and doubt and sin, that, through ages and tribes of antiquity, brooded dark-winged over the soul, and eclipsed the heaven of future joy from man's imagination, have fallen before the child whose childhood God did not let Herod extinguish, because he meant his manhood to be the crown and blessing of the world! How much faith and hope, and undying love for undying objects, have risen out of the words which he dropped with low accents into the air of Palestine, when it was soft on the land, or roared along the lake, but of which, through all change and passing away of heaven and earth, human memory will never lose its grasp! What grossness of worship fell through him, and what purity rose! It were hard, indeed, to say what we should now have been, had existence, in such immensely altered circumstances, been

granted us, without anything having ever fallen or risen through the transcendent virtue of that born Redeemer. Perhaps heathen polytheists, running to the hill-top or the stream, after various gods, with our offerings ; or savage worshippers, offering draughts of crimson gore to the mysterious invisible ones ; or unnatural parents, sending our children through the fire to “ Moloch, horrid king ; ” abjectly creeping into caves and forests to adore the awful secrecy of nature ; hiding in walled interior recesses to perform ordinances of superstition and shame ; or, at best, like the more enlightened Athenians, adding to the pantheon of the prevailing theology one unknown God ; and, when the pleasures and toils of this earthly state should be over, resigning ourselves to the thick darkness of that death which would have cast its deep shadow over all our life ; as it is said, it took the Egyptian kings all their lives long to make the huge pyramid-tombs of rock in which they were at last to lie down.

Thank God for the difference of our situation ! Thank God for that child of his, who has loosened and caused to fall so much of that dead weight of ignorance and vice, heavy as the fetters of the grave, which, in the masses of men, has dragged down so many old kingdoms to destruction ; and who has diffused the knowledge and inspired the virtue to which we trust for our social, civil, human deliverance and exaltation. The world does not, by a great deal, through all its ranks march in perfect order yet ; but, thank God for that Captain of salvation, the great Leader, above all before or since ; at whose word of command the mighty hosts of humanity are bending to the line, and moving forward to their slow but certain and irreversible victories.



CHRIST OUR PASSEVER.—The destroying angel comes in many ways to close in a struggle with our safety and peace. As

we meditate in solitude, or muse by the wayside, he often springs upon us. Sometimes, a gigantic spectre of doubt, he fearfully overhangs our thoughts, and duskily obscures our path. He darkly queries with us, whether all these spiritual things, which we, in our words of fine discourse and illustration, make such account of, are not mere imagination and surmise. He questions with us, whether there be a God to pray to, or a heaven to go to, or any permanent being in us beyond a cunning composition of the clod of the valley. And, lo! as he thus talks and threatens, our heart within us becomes dry and hollow before him. The shining mansions above fade away into mist and vacuity; and temples and closets, songs and supplications, turn to a vain pretence, or a hypocritical mockery. But Christ the passover comes through his spirit to make the heavenly glory shine again on the world, and gleam through our thoughts by his truth. He reconstructs the new Jerusalem

in our vision ; and the brooding spectre, like that old destroying angel in Egypt, flees, scared from the nest which the bringer of light and immortality to light wants for his dwelling.

Again, in the gloomy and menacing shape of remorse, comes the destroying angel. He arrays before us all our wrongdoings and omissions of duty. He throws in our face all the short-comings of the past. He stings our memory into the recollection of unworthiness we had forgotten. He shows the countenance of infinite Purity affronted with our many corruptions, and frowning upon us in stern and steady displeasure. With heavy blows of malicious industry, he roughens the path of our approach to our Maker, and busily blocks up every way of expiation and prayer. He brings into view the long, melancholy retrospect of harsh penances and bloody offerings, by man, of the beast of the field, and of his own flesh, in uncertain and futile striving for a perfect atonement and peace.

He lifts his ghostly, resistless hand, to cast us down into hopeless dejection over the remaining sin that clings to our nature, and into utter despair of the mercy of God. But Christ appears with his look of kindness ; with his voice of gentleness he speaks the pardoning love of God, and the destroying angel's condemnation is silenced ; while that midnight blackness of supernatural and terrifying visage, with which, as of yore in the land of Egypt, he stoops upon us, passes over.

In the shape of a mourner, too, as well as a doubter and accuser, comes the destroying angel. He sits by the fireside, at the table, and the grave, when dear objects have gone, and raises a miserable cry, that all comfort and joy, and reciprocity of affection, are gone and lost with them. He suggests that the pleasant and happy days we have known shall come back no more ; that the heart shall thrill no more, as once it did, with the tokens of generous regard ; that the bright scenes of existence

are all finally blotted, and its noble plans a hopeless, irrecoverable wreck. But, as he thus goes on, Christ comes, and the destroying angel passes over. The cross of Christ rises in sight ; and the petition that sounds from it sends back a pealing rebuke that scatters our despondency. The blood that trickles down it writes, in the signals of death, the promises of eternity, and puts upon everything pure and good we have known, or can conceive, the seal of an endless duration. The sepulchre of Christ discloses its broken door ; and, through the rent in that wall which hid the everlasting, we see with him the living host of youth and elders, while the destroying angel passes over. Now, grief may do its worst. We are superior to it, and have got the better of it. It no more flies in the air above us. By the Son of God, it is forced to raise us above itself. It can lay waste the earth, and commit havoc in the abodes of men ; but all its desolations are more than repaired. It can come into the

room where is the mother with her babe on her knees, to extinguish that spark of life which has been more to her than the sun ; and she shall say it is good in God to let it come and do so ; for, to her grief, there is a passover.

O ! without that passover to those afflicted and bereaved, in whom the affections have to the utmost been cultivated, what would the world be but like the Lybian desert, where rise fierce winds and storms of blinding sand against the traveller, struggling on amid the bleaching bones of former pilgrims who have tried to journey that way ! But, with Christ the passover, the eye of faith

“ Beholds the tempest passing by,
Sees evening shadows quickly fly,
And all serene in heaven.”

MAN'S MANIFOLD NEEDS.— Though, in the highest sense in which our Saviour once spoke, “ one thing is needful,” yet,

considering man in his whole nature,—mixed dust and spirit, a member of society, an associate in civil polity, and a link in the training up of new generations, in short, an inhabitant of this world as well as a hoper for another,—he doubtless needs many things. Nor will I push the claim of religion with that extravagant urgency which would shut out his other interests and claims. He needs, by various education, to get possession of all his members and faculties. He needs, according to the primal command, to subdue the earth, and have dominion over it. He needs to understand and perfect its productions; as, even in his original, unfallen state, he did to train the plants of Paradise. He needs, like Tubal Cain of old, to dig into the ground, and bring up the metals for his arts, using the more precious ones for his exchange, and to turn the forest into his utensils, houses, and ships. He needs to fabricate, needs to manufacture, needs to discover and invent, needs to trade,

needs to accumulate ; so that every industrial faculty may be brought out, every hand employed, every talent put in motion, — nay, so that the community itself may not fail and sink, but be civilized and refined, and, with its corporations and capital, its genius and skill, undertake every useful enterprise for the individual and public good. In setting before you a moral and spiritual need, I certainly do not forget these personal, social and political necessities, nor would shove them by an inch from their place ; but, admitting the latter, maintain the supreme importance, the predominating position, of the former.

Let the soul within us become our solemn preacher, and speak in its own person, and what would it say from the breast of each one of us ? — “ I need the air of heaven for outward breathing ; and I need the light of heaven for sight. I need the bodily sustenance on which the vigor and clearness even of my own operations depend. I need

the decencies of a customary appearance and deportment in my external association with men. I need that exemption from galling and ceaseless labor which shall give me opportunity to develop my understanding. But" — and is not the tone in which it speaks deepening, and the accent more thrilling? — "I need other, greater things. I need, O ! I need inward peace. I need 'a conscience void of offence towards God and man.' I need a religious courage, and a trust which the fluctuations of the world, on which we are borne as a little boat on the sea, cannot unseat, nor its sudden changes of life and death, severing the closest cords, overthrow. I need objects vast enough and holy enough to absorb into themselves these yearning affections, content with no created good. I need to live, not for mere eating and drinking and clothing, and passing selfishly through my career ; but I need — O ! how deeply ! — to be endeared by sentiments of love, and deeds disinterested, to my fellow-beings.

I need to make the world better that I have lived in it, to leave some other monument and memorial of myself than a grave-stone, or a flattering epitaph cut by the hand of friendship in its cold surface. Verily I need — God knows it, and my heart knows — I need to bless those around me, to be united to them, not by ties of blood alone, or transient convenience, but by deep, indissoluble, immortal bonds. And, in order to all this, I need Christ, the Son of God, for my Saviour, and God himself for my friend.”

GOODNESS THE FRUIT OF MAN'S NATURE. — Is it said, All goodness is the result, not of human nature, but of the Divine Spirit acting from without upon it, and we see its legitimate fruits only when it is left to itself; and these, like the apples of the Dead Sea, are always bad and bitter? I reply, it is not the constitution of human nature to be left to itself. It is consti-

tuted in this connection with God. He does not so cast it off. Did he, it would not only go astray, but perish in annihilation. There is, as Scripture says, "a light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." There is an "inspiration" that hath given every man understanding. There is a spirit that knocketh at the door of every man's heart, not to make him good perforce, but to offer him precious, glorious aids and influences, if he will accept and use them to become good. And to say that the good fruits which spring from his acceptance and use are not the legitimate issue of human nature, is not only to decry that nature, but the author of it, who meant and made it, not to be a thorn or a thistle, but a grape-vine and a fig-tree. That only to be considered human nature which is alone, cut off from the Spirit of God ! The very definition is false. Human nature, so cut off, is not, — is nothing.

OUR IDEA OF GOODNESS SPRINGS FROM OUR NATURE. — How come we to believe in anything good and high, that virtue itself is more than a shadow or a name? — how to believe even in a good and holy God? We see the evidences of goodness in his works. But whence this feeling or idea of goodness to which his works are the counterpart? In what receptive spiritual substance is stamped that material seal which has the word *goodness* graven upon it? God has made the necessary and only origin of this idea to be our own nature, totally depraved though it be called. And, moreover, a deeper philosophy is rapidly establishing the doctrine, that the strongest and only satisfactory argument for the being or any of the attributes of God rests primarily, not on material nature, with all its perfections and glories, but on the powers, perceptions and aspirations, of the human soul; that God's works all praise and bless him, but his greatest work below, human nature, more than all. For we

cannot get beyond our own nature, and the relations of that nature. Nor can this demonstration be replied to, till that be done which never has been done,—to lay the finger on some fibre in the body, or some faculty or fundamental feeling in the soul, which is bad, or superfluous, in this fearful and wonderful frame of the Almighty's making. Then a reproach will lie somewhere ; whether on the creature or on the Creator, I leave others to decide.

CHRIST IS HERE.—This is the never-ending marvel,—this the miracle which is, indeed, continued from the first age through all the church, Catholic and Protestant,—namely, that Christ is here. Pilate and Cæsar are there, away, dead. Pythagoras and Plato and Socrates, whom some would look to as instructors, are not here, but in ancient Greece still, in the mould of her soil, narrowly entombed in the past. As men have often been buried

with their familiar dress upon them, so they have the passion of age and clime, the obsolete costume and exploded opinion of their antiquity, inseparably cleaving to them. They can by no ingenuity be clad in any garb of universal wisdom or goodness, to occupy decently now the innermost chamber of the loftiest soul. Read the Dialogues or the Republic of the great Greek sage, and, with all the gleams of essential truth that shine through, how much is there not in harmony, but violently incongruous, with the fitting garb of an immortal teacher, universal philosopher, or even friend of humanity !

But Christ is here, both crowned by the greatest and best of the race, and, in no strange or unbecoming guise, an inhabitant of the secret recesses in the bosom of millions. When we would imagine the proportions of his sublime existence, they stretch along the world's annals, and tower into the heavens ; and, with a humility grand as their dignity, lessen themselves,

without loss of a tittle of their power, to the compass of our poor throbbing nature. He is the word, the spirit, the breath of God, breathing into the human soul, to inflame it with prayer and charity ; and we, too, inspiring that breath, may blow on the hidden spark or amid the declining embers of human virtue, till all around, out of the very ashes of prodigality and neglect, shoots up the holy fire which shall finally cleanse the earth, and, better than Elijah's chariot, wrap its dwellers to the skies.

COMMUNION WITH CHRIST. — Were I searching for some illustration of the beneficent operation of communion with Christ, I know not that I should point to those more striking consequences of it so often noted. I would not survey the great denominations of believers, marching, on their various paths of conquest, through the earth. I would not bring into sight the splendid churches reared on the face

of the globe, St. Peter's or St. Paul's, with all the imposing pomp and order of their worship. Nor would the famous enterprises even of freedom, philanthropy and civilization, with their works of industry and codes of law, and endless trains of benefit, shining along the paths of men, come into my mind. Rather would there return to me some dislodged fragment, some torn and flying scud of that life which is a vapor, some floating straw of humanity, for an index and measure of the tide in the affairs of men. I would recall, for an instance, something like what I have seen, not long since, in a New England village: a poor woman, lonely, far from her native land, with her thin, coarse robes fluttering in the cold March breeze that blustered by, sitting down at the road-side under a hedge, and, heedless of every passer, in her own foreign tongue repeating aloud the prayers of the religious communion in which she had been brought up. Some such obscure fact would recur in

demonstration that, when the spire of childhood's church, like the light-house to the out-sailing mariner, has faded and sunk in the distance from the exile's eye ; when the familiar voice in supplication is no longer heard ; and the choir, to sing the verses out of David's Psalms, in which the sojourner, now in a strange land, once mingled jubilant notes, is forever disbanded ; yet, with a more than brotherly or sisterly bond, the union of spirits from and in Christ still holds, and raises wanderers, from the corners of the world, in the same worship and trust to the skies ; or perhaps enables our own kindred in another zone, with their expiring breath, to yield up the ghost to God in the same faith which consoles us for their departure.



IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND THE SON, AND THE HOLY GHOST. — Perhaps no other phrase of the New Testament has been so frequently spoken ; has so widely

prevailed, and been learned by heart, as the Gospel's grand expression ; has borne down such a weight of historic meaning in notable events and stirring passages among Christians ; of whose significance and effect it has been itself the cause or culmination, or at this moment holds, pours out in the world, or carries to heaven, in solemn appeal, so much earnestness and sometimes agony of emotion. Nothing have the tongues of elders in the church so often devoutly ejaculated, or the ears of children wonderingly heard. From lips warm with zeal and love, it has swelled up in how many a prayer ! In strains of what power and sweetness it has sounded forth in many a musical hosanna ! Of what solemn vows and consecrations it has been the seal ; and furnished the most binding sanction, and held for millions, in the close tie of its complex meaning, the strongest life-long bonds ! Judged by the effects it produces, by the engagements to God and man it sustains, or by the everlasting sense its

few words convey to the soul, it is the greatest sentence of human speech. Nor has it been allowed to become the proof-text, support, or peculiar property of any one portion of Christendom or class of Christians ; but, while different sects have torn asunder, each into its own favorite piece and fragment, the Master's teaching, as his garment was torn at his crucifixion, this saying, as though its sublimity had constrained special regard, and its purport were everywhere felt essential to faith, has been claimed and used by all.

THE CHRISTIAN FORMULA OF THE DEITY.

—These three terms, then, *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost*, constitute the grand Christian formula of the Deity, considered as practically at work in the world to redeem and save. Vast and very marvellous is its implication of power. This mode of instruction respecting the supreme reality, so baffling the inquiry which would scale

the heavens, has brought him that formed us very near ; has made us feel his hand upon us and hear his whisper within us, and built a ladder on which little children can climb up after him into the skies. He no longer remains a faint conception, that appears or vanishes like a revolving light ; one among other notions, ever changing their bodiless and unsubstantial shapes to the versatile fancy by which they are produced ; but becomes a force upon which we lean and cannot escape from, an arm against which we strike in our transgression or are led in our obedience. He is let down upon us from above, encompasses us around, and stands before our wayward steps, like the angel of the Lord of old, invisibly fronting the prophet. The very air that we breathe is now thick with his presence. The cords that run through us link him to our side. He moves among our very thoughts, and startles our interior consciousness with his whisper or admonition. In every design and motion we

are constrained to apprehend him, with gladness or a shudder, as our aim coincides with or is contrary to his will. God *as* the Father, *in* the Son and *through* the Holy Spirit, besets us behind and before, and lays his hand upon us by virtue of those emotions, which, excited from abroad or internally aroused, are the strongest and most constant forces in our nature.



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